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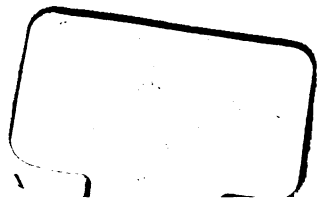

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MANY YEARS OF A FLORENCE BALCONY

BY

VIRGINIA Wales JOHNSON

AUTHOR OF "FLORENCE, LILY OF THE ARNO," "GENOA, BIRTHPLACE OF COLUMBUS," "COMO, A WORLD'S SHRINE," "SUMMER DAYS AT VALLOMBROSA," ETC.

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"LA MIA FIRENZE,"

Said Ferdinand IV, last Grand Duke of Tuscany.

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THE BALCONY

THESE pages are the record of a woman's home in the city of Florence for twenty years.

The balcony, massive and spacious, with time-worn parapet, is above the door of the house, and affords a glimpse of distant hills across the Arno, adjacent gardens, and the range of street to the Cascine gate, in one direction, the Lung' Arno, spanned by bridges, to the height of San Miniato in the other.

It is a balcony of many memories of the passing seasons, of clouds, sunshine, and starry nights. Time has flowed on swiftly, imperceptibly, the days strung on the fragile chain of events, all interwoven into the pattern of the weeks, months, and years.

Few visitors to the Arno banks, especially women, fail to question themselves thus:

"How would I like to dwell in the Flower City? in villa of the suburbs, apartment of some modern

thoroughfare, or artistic nook of an old palace, with a *loggia* full of flowers? What mental and social advantages could I enjoy? What are the resources of the shops, and the kitchen?"

May such strangers within the gates find interest in lingering for an hour on a Florence balcony!

MANY YEARS OF A FLORENCE BALCONY

I

THE WELCOME OF THE CITY

In the present day Florence welcomes all newcomers as she has done in the past. Her invitation to the stranger of other lands is sweet and beguiling. Her greeting is:

"Come and dwell within my boundaries of encircling hills, of dark streets with austere memories, of open, sunny squares flanked by gardens and villas. Wide avenues extend on every side to the open country, with trifling obstruction of unsightly suburbs. Find here what you seek, according to your need."

Kings, queens, princes, statesmen, and magnates of the great markets of finance sojourn here, and pass on. The artist is offered a retreat of seclu-

sion amidst the olives of Settignano, in which to elaborate his Ideal. The British, or Hungarian diplomatist may muse on passing Dynasties, seated on the terrace of his ancient villa. The scholar haunts the alcoves of the libraries in quest of precious lore, while the traveller lingers amidst the inexhaustible resources of museum, gallery, and cloister.

Florence is old in worldly wisdom, yet ever young in her charm of attraction! Her hospitality is varied and liberal. Crœsus basking on the Arno bank in aged invalidism, sheltered by casements of tinted glass and draped chambers, is caressed by the town. She equally tolerates some pallid, grey-bearded exile, poet or patriot, on a narrow, back street, gazing from the rusty balcony of a dilapidated tenement down on the palms and fairy pavilions of the gardens of Crœsus, while a slatternly little maid-of-all-work lowers a basket by means of a rope to receive the loaf from a baker's cart below.

To the fair city, shining in the sun, what are these mortals save a shadow on the wall?

The Arno capital is a paradise of women. Clothed in all the splendid apparel of the Renaissance, velvet, brocade, and satin, with Arras and

tapestry spread in sculptured embrasure on festivals, this gentle hostess permits every variety of attire in her guests, sumptuous, shabby, old-fashioned, travel worn, or eccentric. Laughing schoolgirl, glorified spinster, and beaming matron, each is free to trundle her bicycle through every street, and to prop her sketch-book on the ledge of a church portico. She can thread the routes of the environs, rendered accessible by the electric tramway in search of wild flowers, with a lunch in her bag of brown bread, bought at the English bakery, supplemented by butter, ham, and sausage purchased of the cheese-monger next door, or with a picnic basket selected at the dainty Albion tea rooms. She may drive a refractory donkey from a villa to the Piazza Signoria. Florence is not surprised, and ignores oddities with easy benevolence. The mockery of *forestieri* of the populace is usually unintelligible. For woman, as the tourist, the town heaps palace corner with violets, daffodils, and anemones. For woman, the stranger, the flower people deck the Arno parapet with sprays of delicate almond blossoms on a soft morning of February, when the sky threatens rain, and the river is a silver tide, and proffer their baskets, un-

weariedly, from season of rose and lily-of-the-valley to the harvest of marigold and chrysanthemum.

As a class the flower-folk are an interesting study. The stripling of yesterday will be a stalwart man to-morrow in the swiftly recurring years. The brown, little woman, of gypsy aspect, whose husband, the stone-cutter, and two boys scour the fields and hedges on a holiday, in search of stray blossoms for her stock, grows grey haired and wrinkled. The veteran, who has tottered along the pavement for more than half a century, will be gathered to an almshouse (*Ricovero*) at the age of eighty-two.

Florence still rings her bells. The melodious chime reaches far, to the frozen north of the Russian steppe, the German forests, the dyke-bound Low Countries, Great Britain, and distant America. Perchance her son, Amerigo Vespucci, carries still, as a memory, the note of ancient church towers in greeting to the New World, beckoning another generation of wanderers over the ocean to the Mediterranean Gate of Italy.

II

WINTER SUNSHINE

DANTE in the *Convito* disapproved of speaking of oneself. Does a natural instinct of human susceptibility apply to our day? Alas! The Ego is only too prominent in everything.

The writer of these pages has long dwelt at Florence. A pilgrim of travel, she spread her tent on the bank of the Arno, and like the Englishman who once visited Bruges in a similar mood, has lingered for twenty years. Kindly fate brought the domestic circle unbroken, comprising mother and sister. Thus the sphere of enjoyment was complete, even as, in their time, the family of Jane Austen and the poet Crabbe represented harmonious association, and ample society.

Age has been softly gathered to that beautiful resting place, the Protestant cemetery of the *Allori,* on the way to the *Certosa,* where all are friends in the tombs of the sunny terraces, embowered in roses

and chrysanthemums, and encircled by the slender cypress trees of the height. The sister, life companion, remains at her post on earth. Such has been the environment of a woman's home at Florence.

The most solitary waif in search of winter sunshine may choose a sheltered nook of a *pension,* chiefly frequented by ladies, command all the resources of a foreign colony in matters spiritual and temporal, and stroll about the streets and gardens at pleasure.

The woman's home of experiment was selected in the Arno quarter by mere chance, on a street back of the Lung' Arno, yet enjoying the advantages of sun afforded by an opposite garden, while other gardens extended in the rear, flanked by the picturesque tower of the disused city wall. Beyond Monte Morello is visible, changing with every phase of the Italian atmosphere, from snow-capped crest, and the sombre purple shadow of storms to the tender velvet bloom, the blue and opal mists of summer.

The advantages of the situation are obvious in warmth of a southern exposure to the hills and the open country. The clamour of church bells is

distant. There are no cemeteries near. When the crowd of a day of races, or a Royal visit has swept past night falls quietly, undisturbed by the rough hilarity of the wine shops around the bridges, and a tumult of tardy vehicles returning from ball or theatre.

Is there nothing new under the sun? To the woman who wishes for a novel field of diversion the furnishing of the foreign home of even temporary occupation has artistic, as well as economical, features of a unique sort at Florence. Apart from practical considerations of the upholsterer, the household linen to be obtained of the celebrated native manufacture at Monza, and domestic china, what bargains may be picked up in the den of the beguiling spider of an antiquarian! What deeds of barter in old cloaks, furs, and worn finery at the entrance way with the ambulating pedler, eager to exchange clock, statuette, vase, or candelabra for raiment! How speedily in the home of the balcony all creeds of religion met in such exchange! One of the seven-branched candle-sticks of the Morocco Jews, now so plentiful in the Florence shops stood in an embrasure. A rosary of Brahma beads swayed on a bracket. The votary of Chris-

tian Art could keep here, even in thought, the calendar of the year, seeking the church of *Santa Maria Novella* at Christmas to study Ghirlandajo's quaint Nativity, lingering in the Good Friday season before the shadowy Perugino Crucifixion of *Santa Maddalena dei Pazzi,* and praising the Easter Resurrection at the convent of *San Marco.*

Each year the balcony has been swept by all the winds of change, and invaded by the restless spirit of discontent of the day. Zealous effort has essayed to uproot any tranquil enjoyment of occupation, on the part of health, or pleasure seekers elsewhere.

" Oh, why do you remain planted here instead of flitting on southward, or retracing your steps northward? " queries the bustling crowd, with gaze fixed on the ends of the earth.

The human race resembles a spoiled child before a Christmas tree, decked with a bewildering array of gifts. The courier of travel is the Pied Piper who plays at all doors, enticing multitudes from home with tickets of steamer and railway routes. The summons are promptly obeyed. The Italian adage is adopted by other nations:

" *La vita e un libro da quale l'uomo ha letto sol-*

tan una pagina se egli ha veduto soltanto la sua patria." (Life is a book of which the man who has seen only his own country has read but a page.)

To open the volume of travel is a first desire of the twentieth century. The flurry, to be off, elsewhere has swept past winter and summer, and the home has remained intact in firm adherence to the conviction that God created repose as he created movement. A quiet life is permissible even on such a highway of travel as the banks of the Arno.

Time was when to reach Italy south of the Alpine barrier sufficed. Now climate, and the discussion of medical requirements for the vital organs and nerve tissues of man, in gout-ridden maturity, or delicate adolescence, has become a fine art in favour of new resorts. Even when an earthly paradise has been attained nice discussion invariably prevails as to lack of ozone in the atmosphere, or too much rain.

Florence is abashed by the mockery of disapproval, under the spell of good and bad winters, having been condemned as hopelessly Arctic. The stranger suspends a thermometer in the window, draws the curtains, spreads out all available rugs, and prepares to brave the worst in the enjoyment

of privacy. His neighbour of the Fiesole slope solves the problem of fuel by closing his villa at Christmas to escape to Naples, or Sicily, Viareggio, and the Riviera.

The experience of the seasons has abounded with piercing winds, weeks of gloomy fog, blotting out landmarks, chimneys catching fire, but snow has not lain in the streets, and ice has congealed the Arno surface only once during the sojourn. Italy has smiled on the pilgrim with caressing blandness. Thus the mild winter of 1904 recorded no frost before the middle of January. Tea roses bloom in the gardens of the Arno quarter, and plants of marguerites are full of flowers.

The years have passed, oh, how swiftly! — and precious life sands have ebbed away. The flying hours cannot be checked in their course. "*Le ore non tornano indietro.*" (The hours do not return.) No other calendar of the days is needful on a Florence Balcony than the slow wheeling of the chariot of the sun from the effulgence of July over the Cascine to the waning light of late November along the height of *Monte Oliveto.*

III

THE PORTER

SHE proffered a gift in the early morning, with a smile, a tiny flower-pot with two sprigs of green planted in it.

"Poverty and riches," she explained, pointing with a knitting-needle to a spray of veined leaves, and a little cluster of tendrils brimming over the other side.

"Will the ladies favour me by placing the pot on a bracket to grow through the winter months? Ah, poverty may be the mother of health, according to the proverb, but we all know that gold opens every door."

She made a little reverence, and sighed deeply, as she departed, leaving the flower-pot, and the maxims to plead her cause with the tenant, either that the monthly payment of a porter was due, or her sister's children orphans or her brother in the

hospital. In any case a trifle of money would be acceptable.

The porteress was a little toad of a woman, short and squat as to form, swarthy and mottled as to countenance, with a wide mouth, further expansive in the matter of smiles, and blinking, prominent eyes. Her toad-like semblance was further enhanced by her habit of haunting dark corners, leading to cellarways, and the mildewed steps of arches and garden. She was indifferent to the elements, apparently, beyond hugging a small yellow shawl over her plump shoulders in rain, or frosty weather. The virtues of her character may have been known to her domestic circle, but she was prone to sudden spits of ill-temper and irritable volubility in self-justification, if taxed with sending away expected visitors in the firm conviction that they were "somebody else;" placing cards on a window ledge until next day, then tearing them up to avoid irksome explanation; or the comfortable assurance of the tenant being out, coursing about the town, after the manner of foreigners. Letters and journals consigned to her by the postman at the door were usually given to the wrong family. She was liable, at all times, to assert that the bene-

factor she had served for many years did not reside there to a mystified stranger from America, England, or Germany, with a further luminous inspiration of sending the applicant to a villa beyond the city gates as the abode of the person sought, then washed her hands of all subsequent complications by a flat denial. She usually retired to bed, with a flushed countenance, and her head tied up in a 'kerchief, after dispute, and sent a lamentable petition abroad for a medicine, and a cup of broth to ease neuralgia, afterwards.

Her husband, the porter, a tall and shadowy old man, who shambled forth vaguely, on occasion, in slippers and shirt-sleeves, proudly indicated his help-mate with a gesture of the thumb, as a woman of such clever capacities that she could make any article of attire, save, perhaps, a pair of shoes, and her cousin, the cobbler, lived just around the corner.

"Why do they not all speak Italian?" was her muttered protest of other races.

She held the creed of Naples, in her own fashion, that the stranger comes from a far country, where the inhabitants dwell in houses of wood, it always snows, great general ignorance prevails, but there is enough money.

The little toad woman was actual guardian of the entrance, on good terms with the landlord, and a tyrant of all menials levying tribute on small maids in pence, and on cooks in charcoal, and the contents of the soup-pot. Woe betide the harassed slave who defied her exactions! A change of service was only too apt to result, with machinations of anonymous letters, and dark suggestions.

The site of this pilgrim's tent was eminently old fashioned. The structure had not been threaded with electric wires, at the date of occupancy, the humble petroleum lamp largely prevailed instead of the oil being employed to polish floors and furniture, or anoint the tresses of womenkind. The lamplighter, reminder of the early romance of American literature, still flitted along the Arno bank from the Cascine gate, and kindled the jet of each lamp post as of yore. We are constantly admonished that the twentieth-century marks change everywhere, and certainly the most phlegmatic among us feels a responsive thrill of interest, and awakened curiosity in testing the pulses of the world. Thus the Paris conciérge is said to no longer have a place of honour in modern French

literature. At Florence the porter still obtains, with all the petty espionage of office. The little toad woman stood, vigilantly blinking, on a mouldy stone step while the old husband exacted a favourite daily journal of a rueful news vendor for the connection of the house, or took toll of the sulky *carbonaio,* fetching wood in baskets from the wagon outside, with a half mocking reminder of the sawdust and bits of chips to be swept up after the delivery of a winter provision of fuel. With what cajolery did the worthy couple pilfer the cart of the wretched and resigned vegetable vendor of a morning, adding abstractedly a bunch of onions, a sprig of garlic, a few tomatoes to the salad and beans purchased, as their due for recommending him on the premises. The vegetable dealer realized fully the truth of the adage that man is born fettered, to struggle with circumstances, or free.

Granted that the little toad woman was a creature of uncertain temper and questionable veracity, now full of flattering blandishments, and again curt in bearing, Christian charity compels all possible allowance of her shortcomings. She was a needlewoman, not a modest seamstress but a dressmaker,

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tuous apparel, with feathers and flowers in her hat, and drawing on new kid gloves. At such times she bestowed a gracious greeting across the street on the usually plainly costumed foreign tenant.

Animals and pet birds were fond of her. She had no tid-bits to bestow on them, but she had a way of winning their adoring confidence by caresses. The old house dog, distrustful and suspicious, fawned on her. The mother cat came from the gardens, and demanded a basket in the entrance in which to rear a young family, thus interfering with the dressmaking in a truly feline fashion of egotism. A compassionate forbearance was manifested towards the mother cat on such occasions.

If not a Greek, yet was the little toad woman an accomplished liar in all the glib and tripping mazes of prevarication. Who of us shall cast a stone at her, standing blinking on the threshold of the doorway, for any lack of veracity? Are we not all liars, at least in some of the nice phases of polite disclaimer of palpable and unsightly facts in daily life.

The tiny pot stood on the bracket during the winter months. The rival plants survived darkness

and seclusion. Botanical knowledge of their species failed to christen them, only the fragile tuft of riches dwindled perceptibly, while the coarse, veined leaf of poverty flourished apace.

IV

THE LITTLE MAID

THE young maid went to the great entrance door, on a winter morning, to receive the milk can from the burly and taciturn milkman.

She framed the ingenuous countenance of her eighteen years, fair and plump, with the clear eyes of a child, in a blue scarf, while her blond hair was carefully brushed over a high cushion, in the latest fashion, *à la Chinoise,* albeit the sun was scarcely risen. She was a true daughter of the Latin races by birth, if not education.

The path of duty before her looked narrow enough. She was a foundling, one of the *Innocenti,* "a child of the Hospital" of a Tuscan town, and a worthy couple, a mechanic and his wife, had early taken her from the nuns to rear in the family. She was given the rudiments of education, and further taught to sew and embroider. Lo! a spark of eager ambition burned in the breast of the young

maid, fostered by her instruction. Fain would she have become a rural schoolmistress, and taught the infancy of the village where she grew up. She longed to compete as a needlewoman, and add to the surplus of an overstocked and bazar-burdened world by making yet more satin bags and cushions. Stern fate decreed otherwise, led her to Florence, instead, to earn her bread, and immured her in a dark apartment on the ground floor of a sombre mansion tenanted by an old Countess, who required to be waited on, and seldom went out. She was homesick for the meadows and blooming country-side of the *Val di Chiana*. She had no friends, and was too timid to make them. The gay crowds of holidays swept past her, and left her stranded. Town streets and squares intimidated her. When she had a leisure hour she threaded her way to an old quarter of the Arno bank, and a labyrinth of lanes, where blacksmiths and dealers in copper vessels had dark little dens of shops, and the carrier (*proccacia*), arrived at a stable on certain days in the week, having driven his cart through the country, and executed commissions for everybody, even to delivering luggage, bath tubs and cradles for the gentry at villas. The young maid watched

wistfully for any gift from home, and sent her own in return. She regarded the big, sun-browned carrier respectfully, as the one link with her childhood, and he told the news, with rough kindness, if he had the leisure.

Returning to duty once more, she often entered the Baptistery on the way and said a prayer under the dome of golden mosaic of saints and angels, pausing to watch the christening of some infant citizen at the altar of Dante's ancient sheepfold. Poor, little maid!

Thus the path stretched before her maidenhood, dreary and monotonous. She was a Tuscan Lycoris, a Monna Tessa of a later date, a Latin Turlurette, blue-eyed, fair, and singing a *stornello,* sotto voce, not to awaken gentlefolks too early. A dowerless damsel sits long at home, according to a Scotch proverb. Italy confirms the adage. The young maid had no portion to attract practical mankind, and had, as yet, escaped the notice of the vicious.

The baker's apprentice brought fresh rolls, and long loaves of bread, to the door in a hand-cart at an early hour. He met the young maid, exchanged a salutation, and speedily fell in love with

her. Why not? Has not the German poet Korner assured us that love follows no measure of time, but buds and blossoms in one happy hour? Cupid laughed at prudence, and fitted his arrow behind the door, as the chill, wintry dawn gleamed, and crusty age courted tardy rest under a nightcap. The baker's boy, also aged eighteen, was honest and simple. He was an orphan, kept by an uncle out in the country, and trudged miles into town before daybreak to make his round of delivering the bread. Sympathy was soon established between the two young people. Confidences were exchanged, and opinions on men and things imparted. Behold the meek bearer of the milk can asserting her rights of womanhood, and patronizing, even flouting this admiring swain in lively mood! Behold the carrier of fresh rolls and bread doing the bidding of an airy mistress quite unquestioningly! Hitherto, in boyish dreams, life's ambition had been bounded by smoking a rank cigar, and hiring a shaky bicycle for a *festa* on a mad career along park roads, usually on a wager with a rival apprentice. Now he bought a red necktie, and meditated on love and marriage.

As for the young maid, this twentieth-century

Lycoris, or Turlurette, had the immense superiority, in her modest sphere, that she could read and write. Indeed the correspondence of post-cards and letters for the servant class in Italy may enrich government revenues, but renders existence a burden to the weary postman on his rounds.

"*He who reads rules,*" is a popular saying.

The young maid had ever been prone to pore over journals and scraps of literature, forming her own conclusions in a practical albeit fragmentary manner. The result of a perusal of local items led her to stake her earnings on a *terno* of the lottery, after much whispered consultation concerning lucky numbers with the baker's boy under the stairway. Moralists may sigh over national shortcomings while philosophers affirm that all the world is a lottery of some sort. Like Montaigne the writer does not judge, but merely recounts.

The couple plighted their troth, and waited. Did they prepare for a long and serious courtship, saving hardly earned francs and *soldi* for a future household? Not a bit of it. The lottery ticket drew a modest prize, the juvenile lovers stepped forth hand in hand, and entered matrimony. Their creed was eminently characteristic of their race:

" Better dry bread at home than roasted meat in the house of another."

All good wishes follow the young " daughter of the Hospital " in married life. May she find existence fulfilling all the Tuscan rustic requirements in caresses as soft as *ricotta,* and courtesies like fried peas, or the sweetmeats made by the nuns.

The first born of the baker's boy and his consort will be carried to the Baptistery with pride and joy for consecration.

V

FAUSTINA'S HUSBAND

FAUSTINA was the first cook enrolled in the service of the foreign household. The souvenir of her brief sojourn lingered around the smoke-blackened hearth stone of the kitchen, for pensive meditation, in the blended aroma of coffee grounds, and onion soup. Faustina's husband placed her at service, regulated her wages, and exacted her monthly stipend for wine. The woman was the chattel of his despotic will, and followed the dictates of his somewhat erratic preferences without a murmur of opposition. Never did dutiful spouse more fully verify the Italian admonition that it is the duty of the woman to obey the man with respectful docility. Nay, was not the stout Faustina, snub-nosed, and with eyes like black currants set in the broad dumpling of her countenance, flattered to be permitted to work for her lord?

No sooner was she installed as priestess of the kitchen fire, in the usual commonplace way, than the husband appeared, bowing, and holding his hat before him with both hands. He was a small, fat man, with a bald pate, and a most engaging smile, calculated to inspire confidence and esteem. His attitude was apologetic of possible intrusion, and he was staunchly supported by Faustina, beaming with enthusiasm.

"Paolo is here, Signore," she announced.

"He usually *is* here," murmured the mistress, in the English tongue.

"He has a clock to show," added the wife in a wheedling tone.

"Period of the Empire," echoed Paolo.

He brought forward for inspection a golden edifice of elaborate design, with cupids and goddesses supporting a central temple, the whole covered with a glass case. Purchase of this treasure of art being promptly declined in favour of a store of Black Forest timepieces, and a travelling clock, with a handle of Geneva workmanship, Faustina's husband betrayed no chagrin of disappointment, but slyly inserted the edge of the wedge of his personality into the affairs of a new household by

an offer of his services in adjusting the appointments of the tent.

"If I can be of any use the Signore have only to command me," was his usual formula of zealous alacrity.

He had ample leisure at his disposal. His profession consisted in being Faustina's husband, which admitted of sundry odd jobs to oblige friends in lingering about garden gates, and the entrance to stables. An evening at the theatre was indispensable to his happiness, for he was a passionate admirer of the spectacle and the drama, like a true Florentine. He was sometimes a waiter for a brief space, and again lent a hand as a cook in the busy season. He was in league with all the antiquarians of the town, apparently, to sell on commission, hoards of red and yellow damask from Episcopal palaces to drape partitions, laces worthy to grace historical balls, antique brass lamps, *scaldini,* and jewelry suggestive of the *Monte di Pietà,* in which case he invariably stated that the articles were coveted by a Polish nobleman across the river, or were to be disposed of in the interests of a Russian gentleman about to return to his native land. Subsequent events revealed

to the unsuspicious, because unenlightened, newcomer that he aspired to furnishing the house. He believed firmly in his own right to spoil the Philistine within the Florence border, combined with the Italian masculine contempt, not to say reprehension, of feminine management of family affairs. He had never been entrusted to appoint a home, probably, yet felt himself to be amply qualified for the task. Madonna! Did he not know where to find some Mediæval furniture exactly adapted to the requirements of this interior, on the margin of which he could make a fair profit? Was he not acquainted with a priest who had valuable pictures, cabinets, and antique glass which he would sell for a mere song? Prudence checked such effusive advances. Who so deft and useful as he in aiding to open boxes, and carry heavy articles to safe places of deposit, as directed, discreetly blank of expression in outward manifestation of lively curiosity and resentment?

Faustina was placed as cook in a new household, usually through the services of a porter at the door, who received a fee, more as a spy of the resources of the ménage, and an emissary to display his

wares, than for any benefit of good wages and kind employer. Her lord and master scoffed at such humdrum advantages. When foiled in disposing of bric-a-brac and porcelain Paolo had his revenge. He gossiped with the little toad woman at the entrance, and other menials about the *roba* of the foreigner, with minute and eminently derisive enumeration of modest articles, and even drew on his imagination a trifle, with the aim of astonishing his hearers, and gratifying personal chagrin. Paolo had the reputation of being a boaster, and an idle fellow, who subsisted chiefly on the earnings of his wife, yet his recitals were accepted with entire credulity. The little toad woman, whose profession did not admit of her promptly delivering cards, letters, and messages to tenants, would listen by the hour to Paolo's voluble talk, even when engaged on a flimsy ball dress for the carpenter's daughter.

"So the furniture of the new tenants is not so very expensive, after all?" queried the old porter, issuing forth from a dark den, where he had been partaking of a mouthful of food, in the hasty and surreptitious fashion of his class.

"The whole lot is not worth a dish of *polenta*,"

retorted Paolo, shrugging his shoulders contemptuously.

He swayed the destinies of the home, to a marked degree, during those months of Faustina's service. Too much pepper in the gravy signified abstraction, on the part of the cook, owing to a dazzling scheme of selling off the trinkets of a dead countess. A vegetable, thrice salted with reckless profusion, meant feminine depression, verging on tears, owing to a firm refusal to buy a silver-plated tea service. A belated noonday meal, with a tough cutlet smoked in the ashes, resulted from a late return from market incident to agitation over the temporary absence of Paolo. Had he gone to visit his parents in the country? Was he in prison for disposing of stolen goods? The home may have wholly failed to please by not purchasing a Venetian chandelier. Can a church vestment, richly wrought in bullion and pearls, adapted to hang on a wall, or cover an arm chair have weighed too heavily in the balance of disfavour, and upset domestic harmony? Faustina's husband withdrew her, with dignity, to place her elsewhere.

VI

THE KITCHEN

"*Buon appetito!*" A good appetite.

"*Altre tante!*" The same to you.

Such is the amiable greeting of Italians to each other when about to partake of the noonday and evening meal, from noble ladies at the hotel of a summer resort, to the dust man of the street, or the charcoal carrier as he enters a door with his bag.

Eat, drink, and be merry, is the creed of the nation, if the purse be well filled. *Mangiare e bere* are the two words most frequently employed in an average conversation of young or old in Italy, according to a British humourist, yet the land is a frugal and temperate one.

The kitchen of the woman's home was a most important feature of well being and family comfort. *Eat to live,* and not live to eat, was the motto here. A chimney projected over the stone altar of domestic rites, with square apertures termina-

ting in a grate at the bottom, to hold the requisite fires of charcoal for daily boiling of kettles, stewing in the jar-shaped, red, earthenware *pentola,* broiling on gridirons, or frying in pan and *casserolle.* A fan of plaited straw, like a mat, costing three *soldi,* is employed to render the coals glowing. The home ever resisted modern innovations of patent ovens and iron stoves, as temptingly displayed in Viennese or Milanese bazaars. That charcoal fire was supplemented solely by the *forno di campagna,* the country iron oven mounted on three legs, to set on a bed of embers, and clap down the lid with live coals for the baking of puddings, pies, macaroni, large apples, or mountain potatoes, with rough skins; the roaster on which to skewer fowls, or portions of meat, to slowly revolve in the heat, with much basting and browning; and the tin roaster, furnished with a grate, for other culinary services.

The kitchen of the nook was small, low-studded, and hung with kettles, saucepans, and a copper vessel or so, gradually replaced, in time, by the porcelain-lined utensils of the day and fire-proof earthenware. The brick-tiled floor was kept clean with sawdust, moistened, the walls were white-

washed and boasted of a kerosene lamp suspended to a hook, with a tin reflector for the early closing in of winter evenings in lieu of gas or electricity. A window overlooked the gardens in the rear, instead of some inner court of dull obscurity. That reigning priestess, the cook, always had leisure to foster a geranium plant on the ledge, or a young canary, reared from the egg, in a tiny cage fastened to the shutter.

The economy and convenience of such housekeeping is obvious. The kitchen of the home was managed in the usual miniature, not to say, homœopathic method. The equivalent of the American cellar stocked with barrels, the store room with flour, tea-chests, or firkins of salted butter, refrigerator, and spacious accommodation for the fuel requisite to withstand a blizzard, on the Arno bank consisted of a pound of Hungarian flour, in the daily expenses, potatoes and apples bought by weight; packages of lump sugar, tea, or unroasted coffee consigned to the shelves of a dresser wardrobe, and kept locked by the mistress, together with candles, bar-soap, spices, and wine. This useful piece of furniture was remote from the kitchen in a cool and dry place. The ever valuable block of

table salt was kept in a drawer. In lieu of a refrigerator a bowl of ice stood on a window ledge of a dark passage overlooking a narrow court, terminating in an old well at the bottom. Fuel consisted of a weekly bag of charcoal, fetched on the shoulder of a smutty myrmidon to be dumped in a recess of the kitchen chimney space, and pine-cones, bundles of brushwood and wood, by the *catasta,* piled on steps and landing, together with a store of the useful *formes,* round disks from the tannery, intended to keep fires in winter, as well as the excellent *brikette,* little cakes moulded out of lignite, or turf (*torba*) in a manufactory of the Porta alla Croce. Cellars were too mouldy and dark for service.

The first place of honour in the kitchen assuredly belonged to the soup pot. The cook, witch-like, presided over that cauldron, blending subtle flavours with the onion browned in the buttered pan of herbs, celery, or carrot with all the essential substance of beef, bones, and jelly. Now was served a delicate portion of uncoloured soup, with flour and egg, mixed with grated Parmesan cheese. The usual *minestra* was strong, and of a most fortifying quality, enriched with tapioca, or *pasta* of

all varieties, from ribbon strips (*nastrini*) made in the house, or *tagliatelli,* in the Genoese fashion, to fine *vermicelli* of thread-like filaments, melon seeds (*seme di popone*), tiny stars, and still more infinitesimal fleas' eyes (*occhi di pulci*). The *potage* of ox-tail (*coda*) with barley, or rice, was served with the gelatinous portions of the meat left to consume in the tureen. Again, cold weather prevailing and stimulating the family appetite, half of a leg of the famous Lucca mutton was boiled to eat with caper sauce, and yielded a tureen of broth, in addition, prepared with barley and finely chopped vegetables.

Lighter fare, responding to the *maigre* of Catholic households, came forth from the soup-pot on occasion. The creamy consistency of pumpkin (*zucca*) found favour, flavoured with carrots and celery blended with ground barley. Chicken broth, accompanying a boiled fowl, was thickened with milk and rice. The soup cunningly prepared with milk and Gruyére cheese, had a hint of oysters in the composition. The purées of dried vegetables, peas, lentils, and beans were highly esteemed, whether adopted as a pottage, or partaken of later in a meal, as a supplement to a roast.

Fish rarely swam into the kitchen from a too distant sea. The whiting (*naselli*), in filets, was delicate, lobsters permissible, small fry, such as anchovy, sardines, and mullet most appetizing. Shell-fish, and all *frutta di mare,* justly or otherwise, were distrusted. Likewise the delectable mushroom family, whether the large, leathery *funghi* (fungus) gathered in some damp nook of adjacent woods by the labourer to eat with his bread at noonday, or tiny, edible puff balls, red and yellow, were strictly forbidden. The highly nutritious dainty was associated with the warning of items in newspapers concerning whole families poisoned by eating mushrooms, as gleaned about the native village, in all parts of Italy, or supplementing the evening meal of famine in the waggon, drawn by a sorry donkey, of ambulating musicians, near Spezia, with the solution of death instead of emigration.

Eggs ever abounded in the kitchen of the home, brought by the milkman from a suburban dairy of a morning, furnished by the fruit and vegetable shop (*ortolano*) of an adjacent street, and the market. The worthy egg of so many resources, said to be consumed annually by the city of Paris to

the amount of some six millions, lent itself to every need in the home, of drinking raw (horrible expedient), being boiled, poached, scrambled, and whipped to froth. A woman seldom excels in making an omelette, according to the code of a club *chef*. The result is apt to be tough, dry, and overcooked.

The young turkey of the latter portion of August and early September was good, and even then best stewed. The guinea fowl (*faraone*) of November was acceptable, roasted, and stuffed with a chestnut purée. The autumn shooting of the hills brought to the kitchen little birds, thrush (*tordi*) and larks (*allodole*) to be toasted over the fire, threaded on a skewer with slices of toast, bacon, or smoked tongue, and sage leaves. Even more succulent were these little birds cooked in a rich gravy, flavoured with wine and ripe grapes, and served on square pieces of polenta. Partridge came after cold weather. Plover flew in from the marshy regions of coast around Viareggio, black flesh, rank, and tasting of the Maremma. Hare was slain on the heights with the advent of sharp frosts. The *filets* were preferred broiled, and eaten with currant jelly, or the Italian *agro dolce* sauce, the

ingredients of which were furnished by the nearest grocer, chocolate, seedless raisins, citron, and the nuts extracted from pine cones (*pinocchi*) cooked in vinegar and sugar to the consistency of a sauce.

The vegetable kingdom held sway in the tent during the year, from the celery of summer, the large shelled beans (*sgrenate*), the favourite food of Tuscany, the leeks on buttered toast, cauliflower, Jerusalem artichoke, spinach prepared as *ravioli*, with butter, eggs, and cheese, or strained and garnished with hard-boiled eggs; and *finocchi* (fennel), eaten raw, after the manner of the Sicilian shepherd and peasant, or simply boiled to the early green peas and haricots. A mild tomato came in February, reputed to be brought from the South, and was probably ripened near Genoa. The reign of the asparagus was long, and introduced into Tuscany in 1466 by Filippo Strozzi from Naples. Surely this usefulness to his fellow creatures was the redeeming virtue of the career of the noble Florentine. The varied resources of the modest *zucchini* (squash) were known in the kitchen as the blossom fried in batter; mashed with butter; served as tiny gourds no larger than walnuts, in

sauce; stuffed with forcemeat; and as a salad, Brussel's sprouts, whether in soup or boiled were appreciated, as well as broccoli. Also the grown cucumber, cut lengthwise in halves, was an admirable addition to the gravy of braised and stewed meat.

The lunch (*colazione*) of noonday seldom lacked rice as a staple food in Italy in *risotto,* white, dressed with butter and cheese, or cooked in meat juice, with chopped livers, when *pasta* was not substituted, and the tempting *gnocchi* of *semollina* (wheat) made in small, round cakes, and baked in the oven.

When the sauce of hunger failed in illness, or convalescence, the earthenware consommé pot, with a metal lid to screw down, bought at a bazaar, furnished the result of hours of cooking, standing in a vessel of water, of a kilogram of beef, in a clear liquid to be administered by the teaspoonful. Beef tea, with a slice of toast; a cup of tapioca made with the yolk of eggs; arrowroot with wine and nutmeg; and a bowl of Knorr's oatmeal flour were favourite aliment in the tent. Tempting tid-bits were chicken livers, broiled, and served on buttered toast, and minced

and seasoned on a slice, in *crostini.* The breast of fowls, bought separately of the poulterer, were broiled, and eaten on toast. All jellies of a domestic value, calf's-foot, ox-tail, and gelatine were easily attained. The livers and combs of chickens, bought apart, stewed in a rich gravy, and partaken of with rice, or *semollina,* were savoury. The plebeian tripe, carefully selected in honeycomb of the vendor was digestible and nutritious, prepared in the Italian fashion, stewed in broth and flavoured with cheese, or simmered in milk, as more simple fare.

The *zabaione,* commended in Italian cookery by Prince Napoleon during his last illness at Rome, is a delicacy readily compounded of the yolks of two or three eggs, well beaten with sugar, some vanilla, and a spoonful of Marsala, stirred over the fire until foaming, and served in cups.

The salad bowl offered an ever tempting variety of crisp lettuce, endive, romagna, solid and sweet, cappucini dressed with beets, the bitter and wholesome *raddichio,* so highly esteemed by the native. The code of mingling only with oil and vinegar, a spendthrift with the former, and a miser with the latter, was adopted, albeit the crust of bread

rubbed with garlic or onion in the bottom of the bowl, after the manner of the French matron, raw celery cut fine, slices of egg and olive were added now and then.

The face of a hollow-eyed little seamstress recurs in connection with the salad bowl.

"There is no more good olive oil, Signora! It is made of cotton seed now, and other things hurtful to the health!"

Condiments were not in much favour. Curries and peppers rarely appeared save in the *mostarda dolci,* the thick, dark sauce, grapes and apples boiled down, and passed through a sieve, mixed with mustard and spices; the jar of red cabbage, pickled; the small Tuscan olives eaten fresh; and horseradish grated, and mellowed with cream.

Housewifely zeal led to some preserving of plums, figs converted into a rich conserve, and flavoured with ginger, and cherries, but experience speedily proved the truth of the statement that mould invades such luxuries in a damp, mild climate, only oil and vinegar serving for such stores. Fruit, peaches and cherries, were put up in glass jars with spirits of wine. The apricot jam and orange marmalade of Crosse and Blackwell, as well

as bottle of pickles, were more useful and economical, bought of the grocer.

Breakfast at eight o'clock in the tent was not the Italian cup of black coffee, without food, until hunger craved the gnawing of a morning crust, on the one hand, or the British meal of Florence with eggs, jam and cocoa on the other. A cup of coffee, Mocha and Porto Rico, roasted and ground in the kitchen, with boiled milk, or a cup of mixed China tea in preference to the Ceylon and Indian brand of afternoon were the usual portion, with toast, Quaker oats, or potted tongue and anchovy. On cold winter mornings the favourite beverage of Napoleon Bonaparte was enjoyed, called *Cho-Car*. This substantial first meal, with a roll, was compounded of one third of a large cup of chocolate, made with water, one third of coffee, and one of hot milk.

The tent, in a modern city, did not require to knead the unleavened cake on the hearth, but to select the Vienna bread, the German, Swiss, or Piedmontese roll, the cottage loaf, white and brown, of the English bakery, brought to the door in the early morning. The milkman supplied the pat of fresh butter for the table, while the Milan

butter for all culinary purposes was purchased of the cheesemonger on alternate days.

The tent had no wine-cellar, larder, or store-rooms. The mistress was a water drinker, like the Veronica of the Poet Laureate, "not from cant but preference." The municipal supply (*acqua potabile*) was boiled, cooled in a large soup tureen, and poured into a glass filter. The table waters, *cinciano,* sold in large bottles (*bottiglione*), *nocera,* and *orticajo,* were used. Two flasks of Chianti, not too old and strong in quality, were put in small flasks for use, and covered with oil to be removed with a wisp of tow (*stoja*). A bottle of sherry, the Gerace of Sicily, or one of Marsala, to offer visitors completed the stock.

Dessert consisted of simple puddings, dried fruits, dates, Malaga raisins, the small fig of Provence, blanched almonds, walnuts, and roasted chestnuts. The nespoli, ripened with time and straw, according to the Brescian proverb, was eaten. Fresh fruit was abundant. The order of Rousard to his lacquey might have been here repeated: "*Achète des abricots, des pompoms, des artichaudes, des fraises, et de la crême. C'est en été ce que j'aime.*"

Cheese, a morsel of the old Parmesan of quality, a slice of Gorgonzola; a fragment of the dry, salt Holland cheese, resembling a red cannon ball, the *testa del Moro* (Moor's head) in Italy concluded the evening meal.

Entre le poire et le fromage, many topics were discussed with guests of the passing seasons.

In looking back all the phases of housekeeping for the family with the Florence balcony become old fashioned, mediæval, well-nigh prehistoric in the light of modern science, with the marble covers of electrical furnaces, metal buttons, and magical wires, laundry appliances, and mechanical dish washing instead of a dingy hearth.

The world moves on!

VII

A TUSCAN LAVANDAJO

He brings an atmosphere of the country, budding fruit trees, and vineyards, fresh grass, and red clover when he enters the town gate of *San Niccoló* in pursuit of his modest calling in life. Even more suggestive of this washman, as a homely and wholesome personality is the scent of lavender on some dusty side street redolent of gutters and arid pavement, and terrace above adorned with majoliça urns. Lavender is sold in fragrant sheaves, or woven by children into curious balls, with tinted braids to place in antique bureau and wardrobe. He is a sparse and wiry old man of shambling figure, clad in the modern equivalent of homespun raiment, dusty grey in hue, like the road. His physiognomy is humourous, in a Gallic shrewdness of eye and expression, his moustache is grizzled, and his skin tanned to the shade of leather. He is the head of the family

of generations of washers. His wife is a stout and sturdy matron with a broad and serene countenance, frank and smiling. She rules in her own suburban sphere.

The son, tall and brown, follows in the paternal footsteps, with a young giantess of a helpmate carefully selected by the elders for her muscle, as well as a suitable dowry. The subjection in domestic bondage to the inexorable mother-in-law of this blonde and ingenuous young woman, who blushes shyly if addressed by a stranger, is the Tuscan adaptation of centuries of Biblical and patriarchal standards. If he discreetly holds aloof from feminine scoldings and bickerings in the domestic circle, and does not attempt to defend a son's wife, the *lavandajo* is justly proud of his grandchildren, especially the boys. Already the eldest, Carlo, prepares to succeed his parents in the family profession by getting on his infant legs at a surprisingly early age, and escorting the cart into town with the household, to help the grandmother as guardian of the vehicle on the street, while the burden of the wash is distributed at various houses. Also, the small boy speedily asserts the superior education of the day by writing out lists and ac-

counts, and the old *lavandajo* looks on respectfully, a trifle wistfully. Much schooling did not belong to his own childhood.

For twenty years, brisk, alert, unharmed by icy winds, torrents of rain, or midsummer sun, this washman came to the home of the Arno on Monday morning to carry off the linen, and on Saturday he brought the supply back, cleansed and purified in country air. The house esteemed his visits like the nursery rhyme of the mouse that ran up the clock (Monday morning), and the clock struck nine, when the mouse ran down (Saturday night), with the indispensable refrain of Dickory, Dickory Dock. He led the cart piled high with clothes bags, through the city gate with unimpaired cheerfulness, when the Influenza swept over Italy year after year. Younger folk collapsed. He shrugged his shoulders, and admitted that the countryside, for the most part, had gone to bed with the malady.

"What faces they have," he suggested quizzically. "*Madonna, Certi visi!*"

The mule, with a greyish face of much intelligence, is one of the family. The *lavandajo,* and his son, talk to their comrade with the rough and

shaggy coat like a fellow Christian. The two men much prefer a gentle cajolery with the quadruped to conversation with their womenkind.

The *lavandajo* is apt to be proverbial in his discourse. Prudent and abstemious himself, eating and drinking (*mangiare e bere*) are unfailing topics of discussion on the road. Chestnuts will never be oranges, he can assert any day. *I castagni non fecero mai aranci.*

"*Chi piace a bere parla sempre del vino,*" he says jocosely, as he shares a glass with a friend in a shop. (He who likes to drink talks always of wine.) Neither of the participants exceed a moderate portion.

"*Chi ha terra ha guerra,*" may apply to his bit of property out Grassina way where he spreads the linen fetched back from town to whiten, but he has kept his head on his shoulders all these years. The sayings of an ancient land concerning the flax are readily quoted by him as a stern advocate of feminine industry, whether plaiting straw to sell to the hat factories, as the women walk abroad, or busily knitting stockings at the door.

"A good May makes the flax strong," he will affirm over the bags of clothes, although weather

early or late is never quite what it should be. "One good day is worth a bad month," he grumbles on occasion. "*Un buon giorno vale un cattivo mese.*"

The washman keeps all the *feste* of the seasons in a sober fashion. He seeks Florence on Holy Saturday to witness the firing of the car, by the dove, at noon, in front of the Cathedral; the Fair of the Annunziata in Lent; or the evening illuminations of St. John, the Baptist in June. He may even be met joining the throng at a spectacle ballet of an open theatre, or a circus. Usually such untoward frivolity is qualified by the statement that he did not think much of the entertainment (*poca roba!*), but everybody was talking about it out in the country, with the highly coloured posters of flying steeds, and spangled damsels, announcing tickets of admission of twenty centimes, when he searches, in vain, for a missing tablecloth or apron in the wash. He prefers the rustic festivals of *Impruneta* and the procession of Good Friday at *Grassina,* with many other rites, such as the *contadini* singing to the growing grain on Shrove Tuesday, carrying torches of lighted straw through the fields; or cheerful festivities in-

cident to the slaying of swine, as ancient as Etruscan ceremonies. Christened Joseph, he does not fail in the observance of feasting on fritters in honour of San Giuseppe, March the nineteenth.

On the occasion of the earthquake the old *lavandajo* was not dismayed. He accepted the misfortune quietly and firmly. He rehearsed the scene at his own home with much graphic pantomime, of the family seated at supper to take a little *minestra,* the day's work over, when he was struck in the back by a jug falling from a shelf. No; the house was unharmed, they suffered no injury, but you should see a church in a village on the hill above, with the tower turned over flat on the side. He was too self-respecting to make the public calamity an occasion to beg assistance. When the blonde daughter-in-law gave birth to twin boys, and they died in a few hours, his spirit flagged. He shook his head, and sighed deeply. They were boys, and might have grown up to help the family. The twins winged their way to become cherubs amidst the clouds, like those of Raphael and Correggio instead of remaining on earth as future washmen.

Possibly the type of the Tuscan *lavandajo* is passing away. His final proverb will surely be: "*L'ultimo vestito ce lo fanno senza tasche.*" The last garment will be made without pockets.

VIII

THE STREET

THE street extends from the Lung' Arno to the Cascine gates. The span is brief, consisting of three squares, intersected by two cross streets, with the open space above, boasting of twin, tiny parks of lime trees outside of the Cascine railings, and terminus of the electric tramway that spins off thence around the exterior *viale,* or boulevard, of the town. A bronze statue of Garibaldi guards the entrance from the Lung' Arno at the lower extremity. The street is not impressive, but modern and most commonplace.

Several spacious mansions flank it, more typical of the Paris hotel, or pavilion, erected in the day when Florence aspired to becoming the capital of Italy, than the *Cinquecento,* now the residence of noble families for a few months of the late winter and spring. A theatre, usually closed, save for rare equestrian shows, and a languishing

opera season, boasts of apartments in the *foyer,* with a long balcony, tenanted by English and Germans. Other buildings line the way, lapsing into various stages of the weather-beaten and dilapidated. These tenements are occupied, for a time, with frequent moving in and out of furniture. One may read the changes of the town in the perpetual shifting of household gods here. Now a car of the railway, marked Trieste, Lyons, Geneva, or Edinburgh, brings the appointments of a home to a door, for a sojourn in the Flower City. Again a sun-browned *contadino* loads his mule team, in early spring, with cradles, bath-tubs, and kitchen utensils for the flitting to the country of an Italian *avvocato* from chill ground floor quarters. At all seasons the nimble hand-cart may be seen aiding the restless spirit to seek another spot, like the hermit crab changing his shell. A vast pile at the upper margin of the street, once built for the Ministry of Finance, has been adapted for offices of the Mediterranean and Adriatic railways. Two villas, enclosed in gardens, with ornamented gates, embellish the corner with a wealth of flowering shrubs.

The abode of the American pilgrim was chosen

on this suburban thoroughfare, after much wandering in foreign lands.

Certainly the tarrying on the spot afforded the enjoyment of an ideal life in tranquillity, and seclusion of leisure for favourite studies.

Granted such a refuge one should realize all Maëterlinck's requirements of becoming disengaged from the accidents of civilization. Here the stranger is readily acclimatized to new circumstances, like the plants taken from native soil, and insensibly adapting root and tendril to other conditions of development. The human tree no longer believes that it must strike deep hold into the hillside of its forefathers, or perish. Quite the contrary. Faith in all the varied phases of change in the gardens of this world is much more likely to prevail, and a warm shelter be chosen in a blooming valley, fed by a richer soil, instead of bleak winds of native land.

The street puts out flags on state occasions in honour of king, queen, or national anniversary. The German Eagles salute the Italian colours on one balcony, the American stripes on another, while the Austrian and Union Jack sway beyond. All the world is kin, says the proverb, yet acquaint-

ance is rare between these foreign elements. The Italian landlord leaves a shower of cards at the door, in person, usually decorated with a coronet, or orders, on New Year's day. The Teuton may dream of the United States of Europe of a future date when neighbours will not shake the fist of menace over a boundary wall. The American may ponder on a Peace Congress. Creeds, medical theories, hygiene, even diet, if not national hostilities, are sufficient to keep apart the denizens of the same house, unless they meet in social relations at the home of a mutual friend in a remote quarter of the town.

The street does not lack daily incidents. A group of students readily gather for youthful ebullition in speech making around the statue of Garibaldi. Again the patriot, wrapped in his cloak, gazes down on a meeting of socialists, plotting the reform or overthrow of society, according to the point of view.

The old Italian resident prefers to walk through the middle of the street, with leisurely dignity, in the traditional manner, incurring the chances of darting bicycle and scudding automobile rather than risk passing under the casements of the man-

sions. He is justified in such prudence. The *Padrona* of the upper floor places the flower pots of her *salone* on the window ledge once too often, while she dusts the ornaments of a desk with a feather broom, the wind overturns the palm on two smaller vases, and these fall to the pavement with a crash. Three babies in artistic wheelbarrows, the rosy offspring of prosperous families, done up in lace and ermine, with attendant nurses in brave attire, gold pins, earrings, and ribbons have just passed along when the flower pots descend in an avalanche. A guard, whose duty it would have been to make a fine, and a case, before the tribunal, stands at the corner of the Arno, and sees nothing. The Padrona is understood to have gone into convulsions for fright at her evil deeds.

In the enclosure of the palace court the foolish Dax puppy strayed out the gate in the early morning, opened to admit a cartload of straw, and was snatched up under the ragged cloak of mendicancy as if by magic. Gone was the little black shape through the hours of day, missed by everyone, and the subject of sad conjectures and misgivings. Lo! next morning advertisement placards, rewards, and

bribery had restored the pet, dull, feeble, and strangely cowed. A lover of animal life and character had ample opportunity of study in observing the welcome accorded the runaway. The graceful Spitz, a ball of white wool, capricious and snappish in disposition, caressed the little Dax, coaxed it to play tag around the magnolia tree, rolled it over on the grass, and joyfully fondled it. The black cat was most amiably attentive, and whisked about in a game of romps, as if to enliven depressed spirits. The worthy old fox terrier, devoted only to the coachman and horses in the adjoining stable, sniffed amicably at the restored puppy, and even licked the top of its head. The fox terrier said, plainly, in the canine language:

"Cheer up, young fellow! You are all right again. Forget the horrid night in the den of a dog thief."

Then the Dax was adorned with a blue ribbon bow on the collar with an absurdly top-heavy effect.

Further along the street, on a frosty noon, the fireman was breaking coal for the calorifer in the cellar of the railway building when his enemy, rival or debtor, called him out. Explanations were

terribly brief. Like Tofano in the village farce of *Il Coltellino* the enemy had unsheathed his knife, and darkly whispered to the weapon that hitherto it had wounded only bread, cheese, and meat but now it must lend other aid. The enemy smote the fireman!

British loyalty erected the little fountain in memory of Queen Victoria on the margin of the Piazza Zouave in spring weather. The sentiment of fountain building always obtains, whether stately work of art, or an ornamented table decoration made of sugar, chocolate, or *nougat,* by the confectioner, like this one bordering the street.

Time made trifling change in the daily routine of the passing vendors. The same seller of brooms, *granataio,* made his round, uttering his slow, musical call. The umbrella mender solicited custom, with unflagging energy through all the years, in a prolonged, nasal note, sustained by lungs of leather. This umbrella man may be met — and heard, on hot noondays in all the environs of country byways. Feeble old women, faithful to the task of fetching small rolls, made with oil, in a basket to sell to the clerks of the railway offices, at an early hour, with a little supplementary busi-

ness in a stock of figs, succeeded each other, after a few seasons of bitter frost, wind, and fogs.

Street cries of all lands and centuries find an echo here, from the hawker of the first bunch of asparagus, and the earliest strawberries, to the rustic seller of strings of onions, the *cipollaio* of autumn, the vendor of dried seeds, haunting bridges and corners, while the orange man, wheeling a barrow, makes pensive melody through the winter months. A silent street, for the most part, the knife-grinder trundles his wheel along, occasionally, and a brisk shoe-pedler prepares to furnish slipshod housewives with slippers of linen or felt, while the dealer in coloured prints and handkerchiefs clamours for custom.

Germany is reputed to be celebrating the advent of the tomato from Italy. The dweller in the tent must ever retain the remembrance of the shelled green peas that invaded the street in the month of May, 1904. Whence came all these peas, and why in such abundance? The *pisellaio,* as he designated himself, was to be met at every turn loaded with baskets of the tempting vegetable, eaten raw by Italians, and carts piled in pyramids. To the Florentine populace springtime signifies this har-

vest of fresh peas, and the bustle of a perpetual shelling of pods by women and old men, seated in shop doors, near a church *loggia,* or a palace gateway, holding earthenware basins of a mottled hue on the knee.

The cherry man appears betimes, with ruddy fruit of Pistoia and the Val d'Arno and posts himself on the curbstone, with scales and baskets, uttering a sharp, quick call.

The Ascension is celebrated in this Arno quarter every year, with the childishness of new participants, young men and maidens, sedate parents, and learned spinsters, buying the *grillo,* caught at dawn in the Cascine meadows. Travellers sojourning in the hotels and *pensions* of the vicinity join in the sport. Heads are thrust out of windows to purchase the tiny captive, secured in a rustic cage. Anxious enquiries are made of the unscrupulous hawker, laden with strings of cages, threaded on long sticks, if the *grillo* is guaranteed to sing. The table d'hôte is adorned with these additional guests, to be tempted with morsels of salad, or sugar. Letters are written to the four quarters of the globe describing afresh the day of the forlorn cricket. A bicycle club, named

the *Grilli,* took breakfast on the meadow of the Cascine, a *merenda,* and feasted on lamb. All night the crickets utter their clear, crystalline chirp in the quarter, after the populace has ebbed back to the town.

The festival has an especial charm in the Flower City, even to the sequel of miniature, empty cages swinging on bushes here and there. It is an old story to the dweller in the tent. How great a part memory plays in the life of each of us! Alonso remarks that the point of a remembrance can be very sharp. Ascension at Florence has these shadows.

The old newspaper vendor plods through the hours, with his bundle of local sheets, a small and bent man, patient and mild. An atmosphere of romance lingers about him in the statement that he is of noble birth. At the New Year he inserts a sonnet in the daily *Nazione,* or *Tribuna,* reminding all patrons of his existence, in felicitous rhyme, and of having braved all weathers during the twelve-month to serve a dish of news.

The young journalist has been grafted on the street at a more recent date. He is a characteristic personality, bringing a fresh ripple of modern

life to the suburb. Alert, and black-eyed, he has the voice of a bassoon, and even lapses into song when not shouting the latest telegram of war, murder, railway accident, or strikes. On a holiday he wheels forth a bicycle on the thoroughfare, clad in velveteen knickerbockers. On a memorable occasion, at midnight, he announced, in stentorian tones, the death of Queen Victoria. A casement was opened on an upper floor by a loyal daughter of England, and a *soldo,* wrapped in a bit of paper, was lowered by means of a ball of cord. The journal vendor deftly tied the latest edition to the cord which was then drawn up into the air once more.

The journalist is the herald bringing tidings of the current events of the globe, wafted by cable, telephone, and rail. The history of the street, insignificant and remote in the placing, has actually been that of Italy, in the complex phases of government, life, and death, as well as of the outside world, during the twenty years of residence. Also, the thoroughfare has served as a portrait gallery of the most notable persons of the day. Few sovereigns, ministers, and dethroned exiles, or invalid statesmen visiting Italy have failed to pass

through the street to the Cascine gates, possibly without a glance at the surroundings. The House of Savoy has ever haunted its precincts, whether in a royal progress to the races in a file of state carriages with scarlet liveries, the charming presence of the two successive queens in the midst, or slender striplings, rapidly maturing, in military dress, riding forth in the morning hour. What pageants of flower shows in the springtime have enlivened the spot in one blooming mass of equipages decorated with canopies of roses, violets, lilies-of-the-valley, lilacs, and carnations! What frequent military reviews have aroused the street in the early hours with shrill trumpet peal, drums, and the booming of distant cannon, succeeded by the monotonous tramp of feet! A brilliant spectacle enough of helmets, plumes, colours of standards and uniforms, and glittering weapons, in one wave of humanity extending in both directions, hemmed in by an enthusiastic populace. The philosophical spectator looks on. Wars of conquest, useless bloodshed, and devastation, are these elements to have a place in the twentieth century? How long will men wear helmets, and obey a captain placed over them? How long will they march

to settle questions of African colonization, British, German, French, or Belgian, with military campaigns on land, and formidable fleets at sea, much as the towns of Bologna and Modena fought over the possession of a bucket at a well centuries ago, celebrated by Tassoni in the poem of *Secchia Rapita*. Stifling clouds of dust envelop the cavalry, and the street closes shutters and windows peevishly.

The year needs no other calendar than the sun, setting beyond the trees of the Cascine on the twenty-first of June at eight o'clock, as the longest span, and flooding the street with a tide of red gold light. In turn the lessening days are marked by the wheeling along the horizon of the great orb until the limit is reached on December thirteenth, the *festa* of Santa Lucia, the shortest day. Then a golden disk dips below the ridge of hill between Monte Oliveto and Bellosguardo, with each adjacent tree, ilex or olive, standing out in delicate, black tracery on a pure, beryl sky extending over distant ranges of country. The moon waxes from a thin crescent aslant of a heaven of amber clouds over the Val d'Arno, and wanes in the winter night.

Few streets in the world have such a setting of pure skies, tender twilights, and starlit nights as this unimportant by-way, with garden spaces overlooking the river course, spanned by the bridges in the distance, and glimpses of the hills in the background.

IX

ITALIAN SKIES

To get as much sky as is possible into our landscape of life is the admonition of Emerson. Few towns offer an equal expanse of the heavens to contemplation, within the limits of street boundaries, as Florence in the environment of the tent pitched by the stranger in the Arno quarter.

What pure dawns of the springtime have unfolded, a transparent atmosphere tinged with pink and violet hues, like the bloom of a fruit, or the sheen of satin draperies, in the blended outline of distant hills and open country. The height of *Bellosguardo,* familiar to generations of travellers, has spread a mantle of fresh green verdure in April rain, with soft grey olives, and beyond *Monte Oliveto,* the eminently characteristic feature of the scene, in convent walls of warm yellow brown, now used for a military hospital, is ever guarded by the slender cypress, cone-shaped, the tree of

life waving in the wind. Proverbial lore presents the warning to a city imbued with the guile of centuries: "*La buona fama è come il cipresso che, una volta tronca, non rinverdisce mai.*" The bauble reputation has been a bagatelle of history here as elsewhere, and the armour of the Florentine knights of stainless deeds been worn lightly enough, save when they were required to draw the rapier in a duel of honour. The morning hours hold the very joy of life in the serenity of all Nature under a sky stretching to the horizon limits in depths beyond depths of blue ether.

What long twilight hours of early summer when the heavens, hidden by the full effulgence of noon, become revealed in the serene majesty of night. The lighted lamps of the Lung' Arno sweep in a curve, like a golden shaft, linking the bridges together with twinkling stars; San Miniato sharply defined on the height, and a range of purple hills beyond. The festival time of roses has held full sway in crimson bloom of velvet petals, and white and yellow masses clinging to embrasure and portico, then waves of fragrance have followed in jasmine, gardenia, magnolia, and nespoli. Summer heat brings the mingled scents of hay, grapes,

clover, and the lime trees in blossom on all squares and avenues. Evening lapses to night. How sweet the music of the *angelus* from neighbouring towers, each note rendered familiar by long residence, the clamour of *Cestello* across the river, in the crowded quarter of the *Pignone* with foundry and gas-works on the edge of the water, dominated by the richer tones of the *Carmine* and *Santo Spirito,* then the full melody of *Ognissanti,* and the treble of *Santa Lucia* on the Prato in the rear, respond. Distant chimes far away down the valley tinkle faintly the cradle song of final silence.

Florence is not a storm centre. Justice must be done by the dwellers in the tent of many years. The remembrance of bitter winds may linger in the memory, sweeping from the defiles of the Apennines, now on the side of the Adriatic, and again, with still more grim significance, from wrathful gloom of sullen vapour in the direction of Faënza and Bologna, advancing over northern Europe, which indicates high seas at Naples, Rome flooded, and Genoa tempest stricken. The force of the atmospheric disturbance is actually spent, frequently, before the Arno world is reached.

X

NIGHT

NIGHT shrouds the balcony in a soft and tranquil obscurity, when the moon is absent. The few twinkling gas jets of the street can scarcely be termed illumination. At such an hour how safe and warm a retreat was this home, after the movement of the day; a true pavilion apart from the strife of tongues.

The bachelor of the caricaturist, in dressing gown and slippers, was frequently, too frequently, imitated. Why not? In Plato's opinion the pursuits of men are the pursuits of women, also, and in all of them a woman is only a weaker man.

The quarter of the town, in a quite modern sense, possesses the features of Dante's day when the ancient city was divided into parishes, and citizens were contented to remain within the limits of the neighbourhood. In a suburban sense sunshine, a wide range of park and avenue, and gar-

dens belong to this part of Florence. Perish the thought of such supine indolence! The twentieth century protests in the grinding thunder of a passing automobile, and leading journalism advertises lessons taught in three languages in the motor car, English, French, and German, or at home. Fancy irregular verbs, or shades of accent, in an unfamiliar tongue, imparted with the lightning rapidity of forty miles an hour! If this Arno quarter may no longer be compared with the Mediæval parish of the poet, the social example of Alighiere may still be imitated by the street. According to Emerson the poet was very bad company, and never invited out to dinner.

Within the home the pendulum of day usually ran down to the hour of rest.

On a memorable evening of May, 1895, there swept over the country, apparently, an awful sound, and smote the fair city. What was it? A confused whirlwind of the elements, the roar of thunder, the concussion of some mighty explosion were blended in one. The interior of the room bent out of shape, yet stood. A hush of appalled expectation and dread fell on the street. No tumult or outcry prevailed. Humanity cowered, stupefied,

even uncomprehending of the meaning of the message of Nature that man stands ever on the brink of the yawning abyss of danger in some form. What had happened? Conjecture framed timid and fragmentary phrases. An explosion had taken place in the locality of certain powder mills, and the shock was widespread. Sedition and conspiracy, ever lurking in the shadow, had launched "infernal bombs" at different palaces in a revolutionary demonstration. Then spake an English voice of one born in the Ionian Islands:

"An earthquake, and a bad one."

The old Italian Countess from the Adriatic shore barred the door of her apartment from intrusion of terrified neighbours, seated herself in an arm-chair and passed the night counting the beads of her rosary. The widow lady from Modena hovered in the entrance with the porter, weeping and lamenting, and reminiscent of similar catastrophes elsewhere, refusing to return to her habitation until daybreak. An elderly landlord withdrew from his stately mansion in fear of toppling roof and chimneys to the open space of gardens in the rear.

Such was the event of the May evening. The Florence earthquake lacked all the tragic elements

of the great disasters of history, and was even a curious experience rather than one of deadly peril. The chill doubt and the brushing past of a mighty calamity were felt. No tidal wave swept in from the sea to engulf mankind and animals. The track of the destroyer was not marked by heaps of fallen masonry and the obliteration of landmarks of churches and towers, or a sacrifice of human victims swallowed up. As if in mockery the latent subterranean powers twisted iron chains and bells, dislodged foundations, hurled down cornices and lofty ceilings, and sapped water sources without marring the exterior aspect of the fair city. A volume might be collected of the experiences of that night; of the old American artist who hastened into the city gate to ascertain, with his own eyes, if Giotto's tower, one of the landmarks of his career, still stood; of the Russian lady paying an evening visit threading her way homeward on foot to the brink of the Mugnone, through the heart of the town, with the populace pouring forth from every door, vociferating orders, or clamouring for aid to carry their sick on beds to some open square; of the American girl on a third floor, who caught a falling

lamp, and saw — or imagined she saw! — a swaying wall open and again close; of the traveller, strolling on the Arno, with his cigar, after the table d'hôte dinner at the hotel, unconscious of any subterranean thrill, yet caught up in the vertigo of an excited crowd, and swept along over the Ponte Vecchio to the Pitti Palace, without clearly comprehending, in his ignorance of the language, whether he was running to a fire, or a spectacle of some sort. The pulse of imagination ran riot that night.

The sequel was even more strange. A conviction took possession of the public mind that the earthquake throes would be repeated in terrible form the ensuing night, based on traditional seismic theories. Now all would be ready for the worst on the principle of the adage that when the stairway has fallen everybody gives advice. *Quando è caduto scala ognuno sa consigliare.* Young parents trundled their sleepy nursery to the Cascine avenues to pass the night in their carriages far from houses. The British matron, nervous as to falling pictures and mirrors, packed a basket with provisions, sandwiches, plum-cake, and a bottle of wine, and set forth in a cab, with her family, to drive about the

outskirts until dawn. No recurrent thunder and shaking of the ground ensued.

As for the inmate of the home later discussion revealed a culpable neglect of suitable measures under similar circumstances, in springing to a doorway, or embrasure for protection from trembling partition, or fleeing from habitations in risk of still further finding harm of falling chimneys and tiles.

Truly between the night from which he emerges to the night to which he returns, a brief moment is accorded to man to contemplate the spectacle of the world.

The Florence earthquake belongs to the past in the lapse of time. The street tells no tales. The May anniversary is marked by the celebration of a *Te Deum* in the Cathedral for the deliverance of the city, when music of the organ fills the vast temple, and candles burn on the altars.

Objective elements are interwoven in our fabric of life, and determine its quality more than we choose to admit. We are fortunate if we are not wholly made by them.

Night shrouded all. The street was quiet and remote from traffic and movement. In December

the little owls, with nests in the old trees of the Cascine, alighted on adjacent roofs in search of mice, insects, and tender young sparrows in the homes under the tiles, and uttered their call, like a cat, terminating in an eery hoot. The heavy step of a private watchman was audible, sufficiently deliberate to admit of flight of thieves from garden gate, or stable door. Sharp whistles, as nocturnal and sinister signals, gave warning along the river in the stillness of midnight. Again pervading tranquillity would be startled by the wailing note of passing trains, lessening to the far distance of the valleys, or suddenly cut off by turning into the mountain defiles. The church towers sounded the hour in solemn cadence.

Somnolence on the pillow, when the mind falls through that "hollow land," without colour or form, to the complete oblivion of sound rest, was rudely dispelled, one winter night, by the note of a trumpet, succeeded by the heavy reverberation of advancing wheels. Hark! The firemen have been called out. Slothful ease turned on the pillow. Ah! A fire had burst forth in a villa or hamlet beyond the Cascine gates, and the valiant fire brigade of the city was hastening to the rescue. No!

The trumpet peal of warning to make way for the engine ceased abruptly, and the car drew up before the door. Aroused, the inmates gazed forth, footsteps resounded on the pavement, calls and interrogations ensued on all sides. The vast pile of building of the railway offices opposite rose silent and shadowy in the night, but the firemen had halted at the entrance, and speedily carried a hose through the archway. Conflagration had been discovered in a cellar, smouldering amidst a heap of papers. It was nothing, a mere alarm, a precaution. The street waited in suspense, for three hours, while the engine stood before the portal, and the public was excluded from the interior court of the building. Every moment alarm beheld a glow of light shed abroad from within, and flames leaping from every window in a widespread destruction. A gust of wind would readily carry showers of sparks, and the quarter be consumed. The street, clothed, agitated, and impatient, gathered portable treasures in hand-bags and parcels, ready to escape at a moment's warning. The great building stood, mute and obscure, and the engine remained before the portal, with the hose carried into the court. At dawn the vigilant surveillance

was withdrawn, and the ponderous vehicle lumbered slowly away. The street breathed a sigh of gratitude, and sought a morning nap.

Solon said: "Danger lies everywhere, nor can a man say where he will end when he begins, for he who thinks he will fare well comes to grief, and often, when a man is at his worst, Heaven sends him good luck, and he ends prosperously."

The fire brigade, the *corps* of the *Pompiere,* is one of the characteristic features of modern Florence. All the world owes interest and sympathy, in grateful recognition of courage and self-sacrifice, to the firemen, heroes of falling roofs and smoking abysses, of disaster in storm and snow, but Florence has a graceful and artistic fashion of placing these valiant sons in a niche of fame. The barrack is the famous San Biagio much disputed about in the tearing down of historical sites, and rebuilding of the old Ghetto. The sentinel on guard is still overlooked by a sad fragment of mediæval architecture in quaint iron-wrought balcony, adorned with flower-pots, narrow doors, and steep stone steps, scutcheons on time-stained walls, and picturesque angles. Does the calorifer of a suburban villa of a noble seigneur kindle a fire,

speedily mastered by the firemen? A flowery paragraph in a leading journal praises the *Pompiere*, and mentions the gift of the grateful proprietor of one hundred francs to be distributed by the captain. Is the Arno in flood, and a guard required to note the rise of the waters? The firemen patrol the banks during the night. Is there a fête shared by the populace with enthusiasm? It proves to be a parade of the *Pompiere* in uniform, with military music, and garlands, carrying their paraphernalia of steam engine and ladders to the meadows of the Cascine to drill and manœuvre before admiring municipal authorities. Nay, do disturbances arise of a riotous sort, when ragged urchins pelt statues with stones? The firemen are summoned on duty to protect works of art, if not to quell misrule with the hose. An additional picturesque aspect is imparted by the *Pompiere* serving as a guard of honour for the silver altar (*dossale*) in the Baptistery on the June festival of St. John the Baptist.

The river flowed past the site of the home for the twenty years of tarrying, now in flood, and again dwindled to a thread amidst unsightly heaps of gravel. Thus the Arno furnished the theme of

DISTANT VIEW OF THE STREET FROM ACROSS THE RIVER.

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an endless suggestiveness night and day, to the stranger, interwoven with the history of the city. Night brought readily the shadows of hope and discouragement, with a falling barometer, and the heavy vapour of *scirrocco* threatening rain. The sound of rising waters filled space, monotonous, persistent, and threatening. Would the tawny flood once more overflow all boundaries, and convert the land into a lake. Who knows? For a month the stream had filled the channel, with every tributary rill of the hills swollen to an angry torrent. Already the tide had brimmed over into the cellars of the Oltr' Arno quarter. Would the chill current lap about the foundations of the street before the light of another day? The black cloud of restless wakefulness hung over the human horizon. Night thoughts, while the river surged along, tended to indefinable fears, forebodings, and imaginings of a spectral sort, even without any profound psychological research of cause. Pessimism touches and unnerves the spirit at such moments. Better to seek sleep as "the slumbrous influence from poppies breathed" than to sip the chalice of egotism, and meditate on the misfortunes of men while the Arno flows on.

Morning dawned, washed pure of storms by a keen wind, with a cloudless heaven reflected in the blue of the river, ebbing rapidly to a gentle current through the land.

XI

THE FLIGHT OF A BAT

THE bat flew to and fro in the gathering twilight over the garden world in the rear of the house. Never was the uncanny creature more welcome than as a frequenter of the Arno quarter to sup on the mosquito, cradled in every fountain, uncovered well, Cascine hedge, and river bed, where plants of the nettle family thrive. Humanity is tormented under curtains, or patiently endures stings while at work, early and late, questions fate, with irritable vehemence:

"Oh, why was the mosquito, and especially the Arno mosquito ever born?"

Science invariably replies: "To furnish food in insect life for the birds, especially the bats, emerging from dark nooks where they have hidden during the hours of garish light to eat in the dusk."

A fig for the reasonings of Science! If chem-

istry would only mingle some deadly fluid with the fountains of the Arno quarter to destroy eggs and larvæ of the vicious mosquito the bat might subsist on other fare. Besides the stealthy flight of *pipistrello* has quite another cause. The creature is shabby, impecunious, and hopelessly in debt so that it fears to be much seen abroad before evening. Gozzi has told all about the matter in one of his *Favole.*

Once upon a time the bat became imbued with the spirit of the age, and envied the swallow as a traveller ever on the wing over land and sea, and wished to do likewise. The bat borrowed money of the swallow for suitable equipments of travel (bags and shawl straps), and even some merchandise (mosaic, silver spoons, terra-cotta work) to sell in foreign markets. The bat proved a hapless tourist, a bad sailor overtaken by storms, and a wretched landsman, plundered of everything on foreign soil. A return home ensued. The swallow came back from a long flight to the East, and demanded payment of the unfortunate and bankrupt bat. The debtor evaded the creditor. The citizens, the sparrows, owls, and falcons gossiped about the matter. The swallow, alert and indignant, would

stand no nonsense from anybody, and issued a mandate against the bat. This is the true reason for the debtor hiding by day, and only sneaking out at nightfall. Mosquito fare may represent the dole of charity in daily bread, or a ticket to the economic kitchens.

The gardens of the Arno quarter, where the bat hovers, are of modest dimensions, with arbours covered with banksia roses, wistaria vines draping boundaries, a little hot-house sheltered in one corner, an occasional evergreen, like a Christmas tree, planted by the children in the middle of a grass plot, or a row of poplars. The tower of city wall, with Monte Morello in the background, bounds the horizon. Birds make the garden realm melodious at all seasons. The blackbird, most welcome of rich songsters, haunts the bushes, and hops along the paths, while high trees of the vicinity are blackbird cradles, rocked by every wind. Once the mother cat caught a young blackbird, venturing fearlessly near a laurel hedge, and the little toad woman of a portress rescued the fledgling, scolding the hunter severely. The mother cat had a sulky and thoroughly disreputable aspect afterwards, as if convicted of a crime. Why should man, the

hunter, slay partridge, grouse, and hare, and Puss, the hunter, not obey feline instincts of hunger? In her turn did the portress toast the young blackbird over the fire for herself as the *bonne bouche* of Corsica?

Chaffinches and thrushes pour forth a flood of song, at times, in the shrubbery, and tiny wren folk twitter about their own affairs among the branches, observed gravely by some prowling grimalkin on a wall. Captive canaries, linnets, and parrots add a note, in cages hung on nails outside of kitchen shutters.

The swallow reigns supreme here as elsewhere over all tame, stay-at-home birds, contented to seek insects in the grass and water, or buds on the evergreens, and even sleep in caves and hollow trees until spring, equivalent to remaining in the chimney corner. The graceful messenger of spring is also an emblem of restless discontent in the longing to voyage far and see the world. The arrival of the pretty tourist has ever been an event of interest in the home. Every season all the legends and stories of swallow lore may be woven together afresh in the Arno quarter in greeting of the traveller that has once more braved the

perils of the route in storms and whirlwind to regain the eaves of the house. Welcome, Soala of Scandinavia, once hovering over the cross to console the Crucified One! Hail, pet of Greek childhood in song and festival, emblematic of the Roman Penates, and bird dedicated to the Madonna by Catholicism! In Tuscany it is a good omen if the swallow is under the roof on the twenty-first of March, the *festa* of San Benedetto. Florence announces that the swallow has arrived with its luggage as the harbinger of spring travel.

One does not need to be an ornithologist to enjoy many whims of nest building within town limits. Winged visitors to the tent may imitate the wagtail that once adapted bits of watch spring, lined with down, and placed in the fork of a tree for a home, or the sparrow that utilized fragments of a feather fan in an ancient French church for eggs. To every bird its own nest is beautiful. *Ad ogni uccello, suo nido e bello.* How admirable are the domestic virtues of the swallow! When it returns to Europe, and the tent, rustic simplicity obtains in the choice of some mossy nook, or a chimney pipe as a retreat wherein to rear a family. As a traveller its roulade can be interpreted: "I

have a winter residence near the Metopes of the Parthenon in a hole made by a cannon ball."

The reminiscence of another year may be:

"I have a little chamber in the ceiling of a café at Smyrna. The Hadjis count their amber beads on the threshold. I, also, frequent a triglyph on the front of a temple of Baalbec. My address at Rhodes is the palace of the Chevaliers. Each season I sojourn, for a time, under the capitals of the black columns. Yes, and I halt at Malta when I am a bit stiff with fatigue after visiting the minarets of Cairo, and beating my pinions to the first cataract."

Behold the renowned bird that has lodged amidst marble shaft and gilded halls returning to Florence gardens — not to dun the unlucky bat — but to soberly put together tiny pellets of mud, or clay, mixed with bits of straw and fine hay, lined with feathers in a sheltered corner, for a nursery. The poet in the home could muse on one of the most beautiful themes in nature on the labour of nest building, with two pairs of wings intent on the same task, and two hearts of little birds in unison of a superb aim to accomplish.

A young couple, one spring, flew down into the

narrow court (*corticino*) with a well at the bottom, and the lady bird insisted on placing her abode on the ledge of a little casement of a stairway. Had the sash been opened ruin would have ensued. Lives there a heedless mortal who would have disturbed the inexperienced housekeeper? Surely not. The swallow knew humanity, and possibly her choice was a sarcasm on the sweeping and dusting propensities of the tenants. The nest was built, the eggs laid, the future brood apparently assured, when capricious April sent a storm of thunder, lightning, and hail down the court, and filled the cup-like habitation with slush. Thus was exemplified the truth of the proverb: One swallow does not make spring. *Una rondine non fa primavera.* The young pair perched on a water pipe to consider the wreck of their hopes and fears, with much twittering. The father bird scolded:

"I told you so! You would have your own way in choosing that unprotected window ledge."

Then the mother bird lost her temper, and flew up to the roof piping:

"Oh, come along, and don't be *too* tiresome!"

The air was soft, the gardens quiet, and the shadowy flight of the bat melancholy. The sounds

of the town expired in arriving, brought by the wind. Worthy *pipistrello,* flitter-mouse, or bat, may your appetite never be less, and you continue to make an evening repast of the Arno mosquito!

XII

THE FIRST POST-BOX

HISTORY records that a certain British Prime Minister posted his own letters, or entrusted his correspondence solely to his daughter.

If you sojourn on the banks of the Arno, and share the preferences of this great man, put on your hat, emerge from the precincts of the home, letter in hand, and walk to the upper portion of the street, and thence skirt the Cascine, and avenue which lead to the Prato arch and thoroughfare. Few roads to a prosaic post-box can boast of equal charm. On the left hand extends the belt of park with a margin of trees, now clothed in the delicate green foliage of spring, now changing to the yellow and ochre hues of late autumn, shedding down a golden rain of leaves on the hedges, bordered with roses, châlets, and passing horses, automobiles, tram-cars, or bicycles; and again making a grey etching-like tracery of leafless branches on

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the sky. Beyond stretches the open country, with meadows reaching to the first hills, dotted with white houses on the slopes, and the environment of purple and blue mountains, touched by every tone of change in sunshine, cloud, and wind of the day. Follow the pavement on the right past the quaint, low, country house, once beyond town limits, and still covered with vines in flower. The stone tower of the former city wall, with an ornamented parapet, rises opposite. On a cold day an old man draws up his little cart in the shelter of the tower, holding a furnace, with a stove-pipe attached, and blows the flame briskly with a little fan, to roast chestnuts for sale. Further on you pass ranges of modern houses to the wide, dusty space of the Prato, with the old, weather-worn tower of that boundary, gathering place of omnibus, cabs, and country vehicles. The suburban limit would be unsightly and uninteresting enough but for the setting. Each diverging avenue ends in a realm of hills, dreamy, steeped in haze, and with a velvet bloom in the hollows of exquisite beauty. The *viale in curva* (curved avenue), bordered by modern villas and gardens, has a prospect of Fiesole and Monte Senario in the distance. The

street beyond the Prato gate is framed by Monte Morello, and a rampart of blue heights, hills behind hills to the Carrara peaks and the sea. Even the bleak, unkempt highway known as the Prato has a hint of Vallombrosa, and the Falterona on the remote horizon beyond intervening shabby roofs. The dignity of the Prato has long since vanished. Time was when the Grand Dukes of Tuscany drove in state carriages, with postilions, out this route to the Cascine, or witnessed spectacles from the *loggia* above the gate of the old tower. Now the famous garden of the *Oricellarj*, meeting place of poets and philosophers in the Middle Ages, has been effaced, if the car of the spring festival of the Duomo is still sheltered in the adjacent stable for the white oxen to come and fetch it.

The patriarchal palace, with garden and dependencies of a princely family, dominates the quarter, with characteristic features, such as separate households maintained by innumerable branches, and one table of domestic dining presided over by the parents; of devout observance of church fasts and festivals on the part of pious ladies, to the edification of the neighbourhood, the dependants still gathered about the seigneur in a Feudal fashion.

Are not the stables and horses decked with flowers by an army of grooms and lacqueys on the fête of St. Anthony, patron of animals? Do not the patroness ladies bestow gifts of blessed eggs, in their season, and send menials to make purchases, when the Fair is held in little booths and tents around the old Prato tower on a Sunday in Lent, nuts, oranges, toys for poor children, and the famous wafers, *briggidine,* made on the spot with irons over a small furnace, all tied up in new coloured handkerchiefs to bestow on expectant pensioners?

A low range of buildings flank the palace in the direction of the gate tower, a blacksmith's open forge, a shop of old iron utensils, a cobbler, or a wine-shop. The post-office is next door to the blacksmith, with two exterior boxes painted red. Pause on the curbstone, and observe the long, white roads extending in four directions, with the ancient gate at the cross-ways, like the branching paths of life. A daily pilgrimage from the home to the post-box admits of a leisurely noting of trifles, such as the swift passage of a plump, white pony, driven by a lady, a sedate grey donkey, like a mouse, attached to a tiny cart, a group of eques-

trians under the trees, or a sharply alert youth, wearing yellow shoes, who surveys the pedestrian, under the very eye of a guard, with reference to the usual bags, chains, and external watches of feminine attire. Strangers of every country may be met, either seeking the post-office, or emerging from *pensions* of the vicinity to take the omnibus for museum and gallery.

In modest imitation of the British statesman cross the street, and slide the letter into the aperture of the red box on the wall. A mild and well-bred official, with grey hair, and a painstaking youth wearing spectacles rule in the adjacent interior. Their daily experience of foreign affairs is vast. Nothing surprises them in an address, or a demand. Their familiarity with author's manuscript, and indifference, at the same time, augurs much literary effort on the part of the public. Truly, all the world writes in this twentieth century. Consider the correspondence and post-cards consigned to the red box in the twenty-four hours. Does not woman, especially the travelling schoolgirl, emulate and surpass the grandmothers of the Eighteenth Century?

Erasmus wrote twenty letters a day, and received

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ASTOR, LENOX
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

At the lower angle of the tiny space of piazza is the building adapted to the uses of a branch post-office of this district, with two letter boxes on the exterior. Few relics of mediæval architecture in Florence possess more interest. Several years ago this picturesque building was intact as the *Loggia,* or porch, of the Rucellai family in the dark palace opposite. Domestic gatherings were held, in ancient times, in this *Loggia* on summer evenings, so characteristic of the Renaissance, the open-air drawing-room, where everybody was quite at ease in the street, the marriages of the daughters arranged, and affairs of state discussed by the elders, versed in the code of Macchiavelli and the Medici. Now the ornamented porch, this Loggia, has been walled in, and converted into a post-office. If you pause in the little piazza and scan the side of the building you may still discern the shield of the race under the cornice, and the device of a sail, full set. What emblem could be more suggestive for a post-box in an old city? Of all the resorts for the prosaic rite of letter posting this must be accorded the preference. Thus the narrow, sombre street stands in the winters and summers of the years. A veteran dealer of brass lamps places his wares on one

of the stone benches of the Rucellai palace, unmolested, and awaits customers. A butcher's shop at the corner displays lamb and veal strung in garlands. A baker is beyond, with native bread piled on shelves, long loaves, round flat disks, and twisted rolls. The vegetable dealer (*ortolano*) decorates an angle, his narrow booth of a stone interior overflowing with colour and fragrance in baskets of fruit, oranges, bananas, apples, plums, pomegranates, grapes, strawberries, and cherries, heaps of ruddy tomatoes and peppers, and bunches of vegetables hung on the walls in tempting profusion, radishes, garlic, carrots, and salads. In another nook is the chestnut merchant, with a glowing furnace in the doorway, and cakes in large pans for sale, the *castagnaccio,* or *migliaccio,* a stiff paste, flavoured with pine-nuts and raisins, presented on a dish, lubricated with oil, and stores of the *farina dolce* (chestnut flour), to mould into *necci,* and other delicacies. The chestnut shop is the delight of all passing small boys, even in gloating contemplation. At other hours the *salunta,* a crust of toasted bread, salted, spread with chopped garlic, and dipped in fresh oil, is not to be despised.

Unchanged by the centuries is this group of

trades-people on a narrow street. The noble family of the *palazzo* no longer takes the air of a summer evening in the Loggia, but the butcher, the baker, and candlestick maker place a wooden stool, or a rush-bottomed chair, on the curbstone, and enjoy a gossip in a neighbourly fashion. The fat and bluff butcher admires, with much outspoken praise, two superb nurses carrying twins along the street, resplendent in coronets of red and yellow ribbons, gold pins, and lace kerchiefs, followed by a ray of sunshine. The thin and dark vegetable dealer (the *ortolano*) leans against the wall, and leads a chorus of complaint against hard times, and the municipal tyranny of heavy taxes, as the shopkeepers of Corinth, Athens, and Rome grumbled over the price of breadstuffs, and the cost of army and navy in their day. According to the standard of Cæsar the stout and rubicund butcher, with a brush of black hair on end over his skull, is not to be feared, in evil deeds, while the lean and yellow *ortolano,* seemingly an inoffensive neighbour of depressed spirit, bald, and with lank locks, belongs to the order of sinister assassins.

At noon the cannon of the Belvidere fires off a shot out over the town. The old dealer in carved

and faded furniture comes to the door of his shop on the *Vigna,* emerging from a Rembrandt effect of shadow to peer at his watch, a massive gold chronometer, with white head bent. At the same moment the lady traveller pauses on the Arno, and consults the jewelled toy of a time-piece in her belt.

Letter in hand seek the post-box of the historical *Loggia,* with the armorial shield under the cornice of the full set sail, and consign the missive. May the sails waft it safely to its destination over land and sea, — a few characters scratched with a pen, or printed by a typewriter, on a leaf of paper, to reach the mind, and arouse the interest of a fellow mortal!

PALAZZO VECCHIO.

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XIV

A BIRTHDAY FESTIVAL

In the month of May, 1900, Florence celebrated the birthday of the Palazzo Vecchio, and another Centenary of the election of Dante to the Priory of the town.

The occasion was only a commemoration of the spring in the Arno capital, whose charm in the season of roses and revelry is ever sung by all nations, and in many languages. Did not Boccaccio extol the mild softness of the heavens, as ornamenting the earth with flowers, when it was the usage of the men and women of "our city," each group in their own parish (*contrada*), to make a *festa,* such as that given by the notable citizen Folco Portinari, graced by the little maiden Beatrice, in her crimson robe, dazzling to the imagination of the boy Alighieri?

The day opened like a flower, with all the teasing winds lulled to rest beyond the defiles of the

surrounding hills, the sky was blue, and the very atmosphere, permeating dark streets and nooks, pure sunshine. The fair city, touched with the bloom of light and delicate shadows on glistening marble shaft, column, and statue, basked in the pervading radiance, her place unique in the world. No other metropolis can honour the birthday of a Palazzo Vecchio, or pay homage to a narrow house on a tortuous street, flanking a tiny square where was born a —

"King that hast reigned six hundred years."

The hoary patriarch of a Municipal Palace received with benevolence the congratulations of all children, native and adopted, unfurling the great, white banner, with the red lily of the commune above their heads as the crowd surged through the massive portal into the court, and responding to the confused murmur of human voices by the sonorous note of the bell in the tower.

The standard of the Priory, with the device in tawny hues and black, drooped above the door of Dante's house, adorned with garlands of laurel. The town thus atones through all the centuries for cruelty and wrong to one of the noblest of her

sons. Refused his ashes by proud Ravenna, Florence established a public lectureship for the exposition of the Divine Comedy fifty years after the death of Dante, with a salary of one hundred florins. Boccaccio was the first lecturer. The changes on the inexhaustible theme of the great poem are still rung by learned orators chosen from all Italy each winter.

The most characteristic feature of the May anniversary was the placing of inscriptions in localities mentioned by the poet in his verse, and thus commemorated to future generations. The pedestrian pausing before a white scutcheon, wreathed in green leaves, on the wall of the Baptistery read:

"Non mi parien meno ampi nè maggiore
Che quei, che son nel mio bel San Giovanni
Fatti per luogo di battezzatori
L'uno de quali, ancor non è molt' anni.
Rupp' io per un, che dentro v'annegava:
E questo fia suggel, ch'ogni uomo sganni."
—Inferno, Canto XIX.

On the other side of the bronze doors Dante again mused on the ancient times thus:

"A così riposato a così bello
Viver di cittadini, a così fida
Cittadinanza, a così dolce ostello,

Maria mi diè, chiamata in alte grida
E nell' antico vostro Batistèo
Insieme fui cristiano e Cacciaguida."
—Paradiso, Canto XXI.

Pursuing his way through the Piazza del Duomo, and skirting the vast pile of cathedral to the rear, the pedestrian next deciphered the shield of parchment on the mansion of the Berti Ravignani, at the Canto de' Pazzi, where he might expect to see the Mediæval Florentine citizen emerge, with his wife, to join in the festivities of the day, according to the familiar lines:

"I saw Bellincion Berti walk abroad
In leather girdle, and a clasp of bone,
And, with no artificial colouring on her cheek,
His lady leave the glass."

To linger before the Badia would be to discern, in written characters, beside the door:

"Qualunque, che la bella insegna porta
Del gran Barone, il cui nome e'l cui pregio
La festa di Tommaso riconforta."

The old church of many memories was further decorated on the side of the Piazza San Martino with the lines of the Paradiso:

"Fiorenza, dentro della cerchia antica,
Ond' ella toglie ancora e terza e none,
Si stava in pace sobria e pudica."

If the pedestrian halted at the corner of the Borgo de' Greci and the Piazza San Firenze, he found a tablet commemorating the vicinity of the town gate named for the Peruzzi family:

"The gateway, named from those of Pera, led
Into the narrow circuit of your walls."

In the Borgo Santi Apostoli a green garland on the palace of the Buondelmonte encircled the invocation:

"O Buondelmonte, quanto mal fuggisti
Le nozze sue per gli altrui conforti
Molti sarebber lieti che son tristi
Se Dio t'avesse conceduto ad Ema
La prima volta ch'a città venisti."

The house of the Amidei in Via Por Santa Maria was similarly decorated with the stanza of the Paradiso:

"La casa, di che nacque il vostro fieto,
Per lo giusto disdegno che v'ha morti,
E posto fine al vostro viver lieto
Era onorata essà e suoi consorti."

Ponte Vecchio spanned the river in the sunshine, bearing this inscription:

"Ma conveniasi a quella pietra scema
Che guarda il ponte che Fiorenza fêsse
Vittima nella sua pace postrema."

Dante once more linked together ancient church and wall in his rhyme, on the spring day, breathing over all the praise:

"Rejoice, O Florence, since thou art so great,
That over sea and land thou beatest thy wings."

Thus Florence, "the eternal city of flowers," celebrated in the springtime the six hundredth birthday of the Palazzo Vecchio, and placed a banner over the door of the narrow house of Dante, as Prior of the town.

XV

AN ETRUSCAN VASE

THE student was a welcome guest on the balcony. He arrived at Naples by sea, and had made his way to Florence.

He was a youth of most genial aspect, a familiar type of the stranger in Italy. Fresh from an American university of the west he eagerly sought shrines and tombs of Italy for the first time. His shoes of tawny leather grew dusty rambling about the country, and his umbrella shielded his head from the fierce rays of the sun, for the weather was hot and sultry.

He had been visiting Etruscan tombs, and the traces of ancient sites near Volterra, Siena, and Arezzo. Now he sought Fiesole. Seated in the shadow of the wall this pilgrim glanced at his surroundings.

A potter turned his wheel in the doorway of his

humble abode, fashioning vases, garden ornaments, and *boccalini.*

The potter, a stout man of commonplace exterior, may have cherished day dreams, as he wrought, of the pearl and copper hued glaze of Gubbio on jars and wine coolers, the platters and bowls of Pesaro, decorated with the grotesques of Michelangelo, or the early designs of flowers and fruit of Castel Durante.

A vase was propped again the step.

The receptacle was a *bucchero* of Archaic pattern of the black ware of Clusium. Possibly it was made centuries ago by hand, and not with the lathe, was unglazed, and of no peculiar earth, as the broken edges still showed yellow clay. If not sun-dried the vessel had been placed in a mould, when designed by an early artist, the spaces filled in with sawdust and shavings, and the whole plastered over with mud to prevent the escape of smoke. The woody matter, slowly carbonized by the furnace heat, coloured the vase. Here was the very wreck of a vessel, mended with rivets of lead, and with some rude pattern of design nearly effaced.

The student stooped to examine the fragment.

"Where did you get it?" he demanded of the potter.

The latter quitted his place, and adjusted the broken pottery to better advantage. He smiled and slightly shrugged his shoulders.

"*Che vuole, Signore!*" he retorted. "I found these bits in a rubbish heap near Orbetello, one day, and pieced them together."

The potter's wife brought out from the kitchen a smoking *pentola* of the *minestra* of *zucche,* and placed it on the ground to cool.

A small boy, in a blue pinafore, teased the cat.

The potter returned to his wheel within the doorway.

> "Lars Porsena of Clusium
> By the nine Gods he swore,"

quoth the student. "Of course Lars Porsena swore his mighty oath. Any school-boy knows that, only who were the nine Gods?"

He seated himself on a ledge, and yawned. His limbs were weary, and his head heavy in the heat. Could it be that he had carelessly quaffed the wine-flask too freely, in his thirst, deceived by the agreeable fiction of the traveller that the southern vintage is only so much water? He had

paused at a wayside *osteria* to be thus refreshed. He lapsed into reverie as he watched the potter turn his wheel.

In Italy the Church calendar failed to interest him. Santa Reparata, blessing the olive harvest with fruitfulness, was devoid of all charm to his mind. He recalled Themis, instead, as mother of the seasons, in this land, where myth and legend furnish the element of fancy ever flitting about shadowy temple ruins, and dismantled convents and shrines. Ambition was aroused in the breast of youth to add a monograph to modern literature. Why not? A French author affirms that we shall never attain a thorough knowledge of the ancient world, even with the aid of Archæology, owing to the destruction of precious books. Each generation essays to give a fresh version of Greek, Etruscan, or Roman daily life in the past. Such was Livy's apology for writing another History of Rome in his prime.

Lars Porsena fascinated the imagination of the student. This famous Lord of Clusium, whose name struck terror to the Roman Senate, and whose banner floated proudly above the city walls, as chief ruler of the Etruscan State in the Third

Century, such time as the disgraced Tarquini fled to him, and besought him to espouse their cause, and reinstate them in their rights rather than suffer those of his own blood to dwell in poverty and exile, seemed still a living presence on the spot. The royal protest of the Tarquins against republicanism might serve in most countries of Europe in the twentieth century.

"Do not allow this practice of expelling kings to pass unpunished," pleaded these envoys of Lars Porsena. "Liberty has charms enough of itself, and unless kings defend their crowns with as much vigour as the people pursue their liberty the highest must be reduced to a level with the lowest; there will be nothing exalted, nothing distinguished above the rest, and hence there must be an end of regal government, the most beautiful institution both of gods and men."

In the meanwhile the wise Roman Fathers were propitiating the people in the matter of the rights of man, imposing heavy taxes on the rich instead of the poor, regulating the salt works at Ostia, and port duties.

Lars Porsena lent ear to the woes of the Tarquinii, swore by the nine gods to aid them, and

marched on Rome, waging the seven years' war of 245, when the Veii joined forces, to place Tarquinius Superbus on the throne, much as Scotch loyalty sought to restore a Stuart Pretender at a later date in the world's history. A right noble Seigneur was this Lord of Clusium! When he eventually withdrew from the Janiculum he bestowed all the Etruscan provisions on the Roman camp.

The student once more yawned. The house cat, a lean and wiry animal, approached with an agile bound, and stared with round, yellow eyes. The student remarked drowsily, and apparently addressing the cat:

"Ah, I remember! The Dii Novensiles were the great Etruscan deities, who had power to hurl thunder-bolts. Lars, himself, was more of an Augur than a prince, and could call down the lightning from heaven by means of sacred rites and prayers. I believe in him, even if Niebuhr relegated the whole history to the borderland of fable."

Here he noticed that the potter's wheel turned with a giddy rapidity as the artisan deftly moulded an *amphora,* pointed at the end, to bury in the

earth, and hold oil, wine, or fruit; the humble *Pithos* of Veii; the pear-shaped *Pelike;* the mixing jar, the high shouldered *Stamnos,* with two handles; and the Krater for wine and water.

Suddenly the potter's wife, a gentle matron, in a flimsy and faded gown, rose to her full height, with a haughty and commanding mien, in the garb of a sorceress, while a cloud of white vapour issued from the soup-pot on the ground, enveloping all objects in mist. The student was scarcely surprised when the boy, clad in a tunic, drew near, and laid a bunch of poppies and garlic, the substitute for the sacrifice of youth to Mania, grandmother of Manes, at the festival of Compitalia, on his knee.

"Come," said the potter's boy.

The cat led the way, occasionally pausing to glance back, and note if the student followed. The latter complied with reluctance.

He found himself passing through a gate, spanned by lintels of timber, square-headed, and with an arch. The boy drew forth from his girdle a flute fashioned out of two reeds, and advanced with a dancing step up the steep slope. The cat leaped past him, and seated itself at the turn of

the road above to watch the progress of human companions with those round disks of yellow eyes. Only what a droll puss it was! The very presence of the animal disquieted the student. Gradually the head became that of a lion, the body a goat, and a dragon's tail served for appendage.

"Do go away!" protested the student, with a groan.

The cat drew itself together, glared at him, and spat forth fire, which smote on the student's eyeballs in a piercing flash.

"Now I am blinded," he murmured.

But he was not blind, for the next moment the fire twinkled on the ground, here and there, and he seemed to be treading on bits of amber, and *scarabeii* wrought of agate, carnelian, and sardonyx, like the true jeweller's field of Chiusi. He wished to pause, and gather some of these treasures, but the boy urged him on. Lo! there was the cat waiting at the next bend of the path up the hill.

"Oh, you horrid cat!" cried the student.

"It is not a cat," said a voice. "Don't you recognize the chimæra?"

The Goddess of Fate, with drooping wings, and

holding the nails and a hammer, with which to affix decrees, was at his side.

"I forget," stammered the student.

He was not alone. The road up the winding route was a city, with portions of massive wall visible, traces of ancient sepulchres beyond, and an occasional tunnel opening abruptly in the rock. The interior was divided into *insulae,* or *regiones,* by means of main lines of streets, each terminating in a gate. A throng of people, swarthy and stout, with a fondness for colour manifest in their apparel, moved along the way. A certain mystery shrouded their speech in the accents of the lost and ancient language of a nation that held dominion for a thousand years over the Adriatic shores, the Gulf of Palermo, Capua, and the Rhætian Alps. All hastened to a goal, on the summit of a hill. Warriors in cuirass over red tunics, or blue chlamys and breastplate, moved in a phalanx, holding lances, round shields, and the axe (*pelekys*); the *Fescenines* singing songs of raillery, as they piped and danced with the boy, while groups of other musicians chanted hymns to gods and heroes.

The student was swept along against his will.

Wayside objects intruded on his notice. Veiled female heads, masks, and *pegasi* loomed up right and left. A Fury, armed with a spear, barred the way. A Satyr, holding a wine-skin, proffered a brimming cup. A citizen in a purple *toga* read aloud portions of the Eugubine Tables, his voice overwhelmed by the clamour of the Lydian trumpets and Phrygian flutes. A woman with transparent draperies, and large, disk-shaped earrings, danced in an open space to the music of a *subulo*. At the next turn the Palæstric games were in progress. Three chariots (*bighe*) were placed to start on a course, while nimble adversaries made ready skins of oil to cast down, and cause the wheels to swerve aside. Youth sped on foot-races, wrestlers stripped for action, games of ball, and the swinging of dumb-bells were directed by a *Poedotribes* in a blue pallium. A *discobulus* cast quoits. The *Agonothetes* leaned on his staff, with a pot of oil suspended on a pole to anoint the limbs, watching the pugilists box with the *cestus*. Again the student was bewildered by coming on the armed dances of the Salii, in honour of Mars, the participants in helmet wielding swords and brass bucklers.

The cat, or chimæra, always led the way, and was gradually joined by all the strange creatures of demonology, marine and terrestrial, from dolphins, serpents, sea-horses, and centaurs to the sphinx.

Now was revealed to the modern curiosity of this juvenile archæologist the home of the Etruscan, with the portico and atrium, or court, with a tank in the centre to receive the rain water from the roof. The minions of the household, the serfs of a slave population, were busy in the larder, preparing viands for the banquets of their masters. Tripod-shaped tables were heaped with eggs, grapes, and pomegranates. A scullion, girt with a yellow loin-cloth, was kneading paste in a platter, while a companion ground millet. In an adjacent kitchen, the walls flanked by water jars, a cook, ladle in hand, watched and stirred the contents of deep, iron bowls on the fire. The living quarters were animated. Handmaidens sought articles of the toilette necessary to adorn the mistress amidst cups, terra-cotta urns, bronze cists, trays of earthenware, shaped like a cock, or a duck, and *recipienti*. The lady with her golden tresses crowned by a jewelled diadem, held a pear-shaped

mirror of metal to decide on the becoming effect of a bracelet of snake form, rings, earrings wrought as winged Victories, countless *fibulæ* and necklaces. Dressing cases (*pixis*), *aryballa,* and alabaster *unquentaria* were rummaged afresh for the rouge, made of *colcothar crocus martis,* and perfumes.

How the polished mirrors flashed! The rays pierced the banqueting hall, where the guests reclined on couches covered with sumptuous draperies. The incessant play of light on sparkling surfaces in glint of copper, tin, silver, and glass beads wearied the brain. The path became narrow, and was menaced by half-defined terrors. The student feared he was hopelessly entangled in the labyrinth, and halted. A Gorgon, wearing a long tunic, and with a writhing serpent in one hand, ran towards him. The student retraced his steps, in turn, and found waiting at the entrance of the labyrinth a *biga,* drawn by a red, and a grey horse, with bands around the neck, attaching them to the pole of the vehicle. The *Auriga,* clad in a white robe, with a red border, and the hair twisted in a crown, stood beside the *biga,* and bade the affrighted student enter by a gesture. The latter

obeyed, and sprang into the chariot, which moved up the hill.

"The soul conducted to the land of shades by the funeral steeds," mocked the Gorgon in the rear. "Look out for Charon."

"No matter," muttered the student. "Anything is better than those twinkling mirrors, and the cat spitting flames."

The *biga* joined a vast multitude. The student saw Amazons in red shoes and Phrygian caps, a chorus of harpers, belted and decked with gold chaplets, and a group of men carrying vessels of incense. A *quadriga* moved in the midst, holding a victorious general in the *toga* of rank, a palm-embroidered tunic, and a wreath of gold oak-leaves on his brow. Lictors, in purple, preceded the military chief. The sacerdotal *Lucumo* brandished the two-edged sword of secular and ecclesiastical authority, and pointed up the hill. Speech became intelligible, and the decree rolled forth:

"Forward to the presence of Lars Porsena."

On the summit of the cone-shaped height, the arx of a citadel, was a tomb, temple, and house in one. The building was three hundred feet wide and fifty high, supported by five pyramids on a

square basement, four at the angles, and one in the centre, holding a brazen circle and a *petasus,* from which hung a chain of bells, rung by the wind.

Intense light quivered along the blade of the two-edged sword, and shed full effulgence on the interior. The student beheld, as in a vision, fluted pilasters, a deep red *fascia* and *podium,* a colossal head, in relief, on a pediment, of the Etruscan Typhon, or Principle of Destruction, vases of precious metals, and the great deities of the temples of every city, supreme Zeus, Juno, and Minerva on guard. From the shrouded gods of the depths of their shrine issued a voice:

"Believe and obey."

Then Lars Porsena, swarthy, bearded, clad in royal vestments, and grasping an ivory sceptre, arose from his curule chair, and stepped forth into the porch.

The student opened his eyes. Sultry clouds had gathered, lightning gleamed, and thunder rolled in the distance. The potter stood in the doorway observing the impending storm, with the boy in his blue pinafore beside him. The wife hastened to the kitchen with the soup-pot. The cat sat on

PONTE VECCHIO.

XVI

THE BEE'S DAY

To step forth on the balcony at an early hour in the freshness of the June morning is to greet a visitor. This is no other than the much-praised insect of prose and rhyme, the busy bee, circling in a desultory way, as if sniffing, scornfully, at some plants of the balustrade.

Ah, town limits, the dusty street, and parched, sun-baked balcony will not long detain the welcome stranger in such weather!

Lo! the bee winged its way across the river, beyond the Suspension Bridge, over the slopes of Monte Oliveto in the direction of the Chianti hills.

A young mother sat on a stone bench in a villa garden, which was adorned with a fountain, urns of terra-cotta, painted pink and red, on the parapet, and a parterre of *immortelles,* yellow and white. The beautiful lady, in a negligée of summer, consisting of a loose *peignoir,* with her black

tresses falling in disorder on her shoulders, and feet thrust into slippers, chatted with her tire-woman at a window concerning the toilette of the evening drive. The bee brushed beauty with a gauzy wing, and settled on the disk of a passion-flower in eager search of nectar. The *Passiflora* twined in rich luxuriance around an iron column in the shadow of the house wall, a tangled delight of green tendrils and purple-blue flowers to an industrious insect intent on earning a living in bee bread.

The baby escaped from his nurse and bath indoors, and fled to the caresses of the mother. The cherubs of Raphael and Correggio are ever reproduced in Italy, in the curly heads, chubby countenances, and dimpled limbs of another generation. "*Un amore!*" exclaimed the mother, embracing the roguish truant.

The infant, adventurous, and foolhardy, espied the bee on the passion-flower, ran hither, and essayed to imprison it by gathering up the petals. A cry of pain ensued. Cupid had been stung by a bee, and came to Venus for consolation. The theme is as old as fable. Theocritus and Anacreon sang of it, and were imitated by Roman Arcadian,

Castilian poet, and German lyric. The rifling of the flowers is repeated in the rude experience of every cradle.

The bee escaped from the garden in a huffy mood.

"Goodness! What a fright that child gave me!" it buzzed in the bee language. "To try to make me a prisoner in a flower like that when I have so many calls to pay on other blossoms and so much work to get through before night."

Once upon a time Melissa, daughter of Melissus, King of Crete, was set to nurture the infant Jupiter with the milk of goats. The maiden first found means of collecting honey. Since that date womenkind have been fond of sweets. Custom has since accorded them the mingling of the golden fluid in confectionery, at least to the nuns of certain communities, and the spinster members of families.

The bee skimmed over a gate, and hovered about the grated casement of a convent on a hillside. This was a religious larder, where Melissa, the nun, was arranging on table and shelf certain conventual delicacies to be sold in the town for the benefit of the order. Monks and nuns are

reputed in the East to still guard the secret of compounding *confitures,* fragrant, bland, celestial in flavour of orange flowers, honey, and sugar blended to a luscious consistency the like of which will be food of paradise. Thus the nun Melissa arranged her dainty store of cake, as light as snow-flakes, in crisp pyramids of almond, pine-nut, and fig, or great loaves cunningly kneaded with oil, egg, and aniseed.

The bee hummed in a tentative fashion near the casement, and the recluse, gazing forth from her prison bars of duty possibly wished for wings on the summer day.

An old monk sat in the cloister, with the quaint and rudely sculptured columns, resting after acting as cicerone to a party of strangers visiting church, refectory, and cell of the dismantled monastery, where a few members of the fraternity lingered by permission of the government as custodians. The Frate wore a robe of yellowish white hue, and sandals on his feet. His countenance was benevolent, and his beard silvered by time. The bee settled on his wrist, and crawled over one plump hand with a velvety touch.

"Eh! So thou art early at work, my friend,"

quoth the monk, observing the intruder without fear.

Meditation came to him while he awaited other visitors. He could have preached many a sermon on the bee as an emblem of the ideal life of communistic industry in the Monastic Orders. Once a colony of hives were ranged along the border of this very cloister, where a few flowers and herbs grew. Do not the bees have fixed laws, like the monasteries, in contrast to the foolish, roaming wasps of the frivolous outside world? The Frate, musing on life in the shadow of the cloister, welcomed the bee as the embodiment of all virtues, and even with an element of something divine in its mission, according to Virgil. Did not the lips of such saintly orators as Chrysostom, Ambrose, Isidore of Spain, and Bernard of Clairvaux flow with the honey of a persuasive eloquence? As a practical example of piety, charity, and labour he could weave legend and tradition about the bee by the hour. If Melissa, the nun, made delicate confectionery out of the bee's hoard, Carmelites, Benedictines, and Carthusians have ever busied themselves with hydromel, changed to wine by the addition of white grapes, as well as the tonic

properties of herbs mingled with the alcohol of Moorish Spain and Arabia.

The summer hours passed, and the bee pursued its way. Now it powdered its own head with pollen by creeping down flower tunnels in search of sweets, or dusted its boots with the same precious burthen to carry a caressing greeting to the next blossom, and again stored convenient pockets about its own body with wax for use in the home hive. The insect just made honey and wax in a world it did not create. Here was a commonplace delver in Tuscan fields of toil, yet prepared still to teach the monks architecture in the matter of geometrical and mathematical building of cells perched on rocks, or in mountain defiles. If not cradled on Hymettus, it fed on lentisk, juniper, lavender, and thyme. Modern Apiculture did not remove the hive to which our bee belonged, at a fitting season, to the blooming slopes of the Pyrenees, or the foot of Monte Rosa. None the less did our bee wander diligently in quest of food. If the monotonous droning music of its journeys wearied idlers by obtrusive humming, as the voice of utility, the insect was not dismayed.

The wax candle burned on the altar before a

picture of the Madonna in a church near the roadside amidst tinsel flowers in vases, and gilded votive offerings. The taper still holds sway in religious rites, a link with mediæval history when traders brought wax from sub-Arctic forests for the need of European churches, as well as the caravan of camels wending its way from the West Coast of Africa through the desert to Timbuctoo, laden with ivory, salt, the precious Kola nut, and wax from the forests. Garish electric globe and gas wreath do not replace, in symbolism, the shrouded mystery of the pale gold stars gleaming through clouds of incense.

The bee hovered, for a moment, about the portal of the church. All was dark and silent within the sanctuary. A woman knelt on the step of the altar. A tourist moved about the chancel with an echoing footstep. The candle was a fair object, made of the flowers and sunshine, and crowned by the flame. Did it yearn for a greeting from its brother, the honey, according to the Arabian poet?

The bee pursued its way far from the balcony: its day was over.

XVII

A MUSHROOM QUEST

LINGER on the balcony on a warm October afternoon, if detained within town limits by illness, or other circumstances, instead of seeking the open spaces of hill, dale, or seashore before winter comes to render chilling even the open ledge and parapet.

Thought, winged by any idle fancy, can fly away from the silent street, and the closed houses, as swiftly as the bee and the birds. Autumn awakens the instinct of some holiday harvesting in the human breast. The world over, man is a boy again if he can shoot, or fish in camp and field in October weather. Even to go nutting at a picnic is a genuine diversion, and renders brothers careworn maturity and the gleeful urchin in search of walnuts and chestnuts, or gleaning acorns under the oaks of Italian parks for a sunny hour of leisure. The recreation of picking berries from the hedge,

and rifling chestnut burrs fallen to the ground is the squirrel element of humanity. When the golden mists of Indian summer brood over the land steeped in the scents of changing foliage and ripening fruit, the mortal rises in the scale of being to a worshipper at the shrine of nature.

Do you seek a new pastime, gentle reader, in this opening century? Ramble through the Casentino at the end of September, and pause at Vallombrosa to join in a mushroom quest. Why is there an especial zest of zeal in searching for the edible fungus? Is the fascination merely the epicurean gratification of a delicate flavour in carefully prepared viands, or sheer gluttony, emulative of the first discriminating swine of history that unearthed the truffle at the roots of trees?

Linger in the Vallombrosa woods, and watch the men, women, and girls hunting for mushrooms under the firs, and in every copse, using long canes to poke about amidst the fallen leaves, in fear of snakes and the wasps hovering near the ground. The morning is tranquil, and the atmosphere of a transparent purity which imparts to distant hills a velvet softness of blue and amethyst tints, while meadow slopes are still green, and tufted with the

mauve autumn crocus, mallows, lemon-hued snapdragon, and clumps of golden rod. The season has merged from winter and spring tone of white and green through summer changes of violet, azure, and rose to the red of autumn, with the note of triumphant yellow pervading the whole.

September converts the Vallombrosa woods into a realm of phantasmagoria, the dark fir-trees clothing the hillsides with gateways of light and blue sky visible here and there, a brink of young trees of delicate tracery, bordered by a wealth of tangled vines and mosses, and sunshine touching the fungus, red balls, like tawny oranges and tomatoes, purplish disks, snowy bulbs, brown, copper, and crumpled masses. Never was floral exhibition more rich and varied than this careless bounty of autumn in the Casentino. The poisonous fungus, baleful yet tempting as luscious fruit glowing amidst dark leaves and soil, or oddly twisted and fashioned in wrinkled ugliness, amber and ashy, might be spread to lure youth in a fairy tale, with evil goblins and gnomes lurking near in the rocky defiles. The old woman in rags, her keen face hooded in a faded 'kerchief, whose wheedling demand for alms so readily changes to a muttered imprecation on de-

nial, might be a witch hobbling along with deadly toad-stools in the basket on her arm.

Join the workers to whom mushroom gathering means profitable industry if not riches. What air-castles are built in collecting leathery masses, all redolent of damp earth, mosses, and roots! The slim girl in red dreams of earning a new pair of yellow shoes to wear at mass on Sunday, and possibly a touch of other finery to enhance her matrimonial chances. The sturdy mountaineer, who rose at dawn to seek the highest ranges and garner a store of the fungus, ponders on how many pounds he may hope to sell to the household of a villa at Saltino to dry for winter use in town. The old guide, wiry and vigorous, who tends his patch of Iris down in his native village, and grumbles at changed times, the orris-root of commerce now bringing only forty francs the quintal, where once three hundred lire were paid, zealously gleans Nature's gifts of mushrooms in their season. A sober and brown folk, these Tuscans, frugal and honest for generations, dwellers in the hamlets of the countryside. These still fulfil the conditions of Gabriele d'Annunzio's *Laudi* in the recurring seasons, the antiquity of the yoke, and the patience

of the oxen, the beneficence of those who grind the flour, pour olive oil into the vase, and kindle the fire.

Harvest time, vintage, and fairs are seasons of gaiety over the land. Fungus gathering in September has a cheerful alacrity. Even the files of sorry mules descend the paths carrying pannier baskets of the delicacy, covered with leaves, instead of the usual bags of charcoal.

At least hunt mushrooms in the woods by prodding up some curious growth of bulb, or spongy yellow disk, with the tip of a cane, or umbrella, and leave the treasure unearthed for the sagacious native to cull, or reject. It is a novel pastime, this mushroom quest, in such a spot as Vallombrosa on a September day.

XVIII

MORNING HOURS

St. Martha

A MORNING in October, soft, misty, and with a hint of frost in the freshness of early hours. If there must be electric tramways in an Art capital, that of the encircling avenues has undoubted attractions. Pause for a last glance at the old tower on the shore, left stranded, as it were, and shorn of all adjacent mediæval fortifications, the suspension bridge linking together the two banks, and the background of blue hills framing the horizon of Val d'Arno and Casentino. Such a morning, serene and beautiful, attunes the spirits to enjoyment of the most trifling impressions.

"To whom a little is not enough, nothing is enough," said Epicurus.

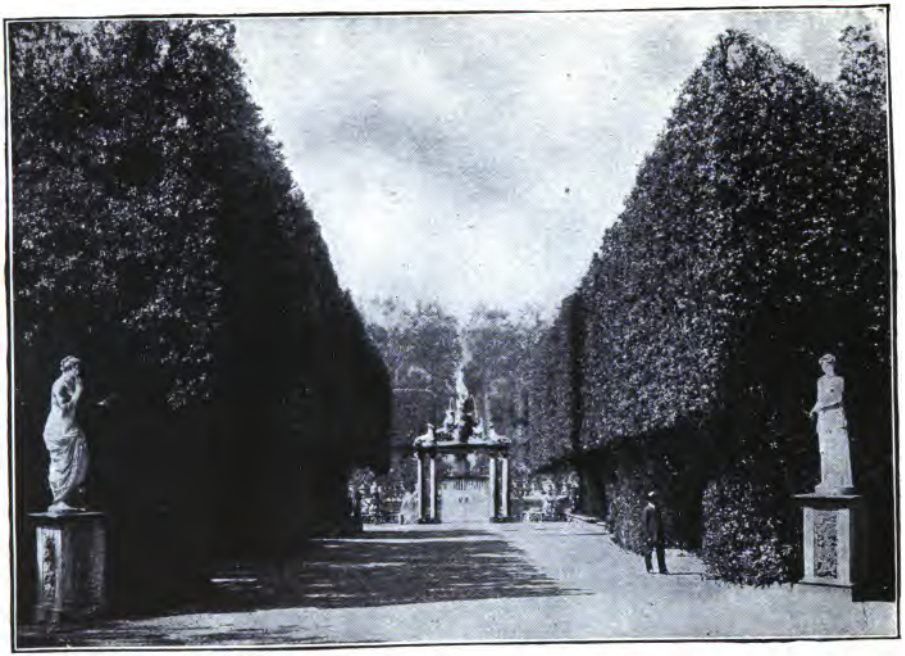
The interior of the car is divided into seats, railway fashion; the passengers are few, in comparison with the crowd of afternoon. A pretty English lady, sparkling with much jet ornamentation of widowhood, glances over a Morning Post, then darts out, leaving the journal crumpled in the corner. A stout officer is transported, with all his trappings of war, sword, medals, and bullion. An old country woman, farmer's wife, or servant, hale and cheerful of aspect, in her best gown of green and blue plaid wool, carries a flower pot in her arms, wrapped in paper. The plant sheds abroad a balsamic odour. She nods, uncovers the pot, and offers a sprig to her neighbour, the stranger. It is basil, and very good to cook with the beans, she explains. When the car halts at the *Fortezza* garden, she descends, and takes her way in the direction of Rifredi and the country. She represents Tuscany, affable in homely courtesy to the foreigner, carrying her pot of basil to lend the relish of a flavour in the kitchen, sturdy and self-respecting. The good soul must surely have St. Martha of Bethany for patroness, guardian of cooks and housewives, her emblem a ladle, with a brush and vessel of holy water.

Skirting the Star Tower

Autumn fog envelops the city, and veils the adjacent heights in a white mantle. Depart from the Arno tent at nine o'clock, and walk to the Duomo. Once more the reservation of old-fashioned prejudice, if there must be such modern innovations as the electric tram in an Art capital, the square of the Cathedral is a magnificent terminus in which to await the arrival of the car on one of the numerous tracks.

The sun pierces the vapour, and the vast pile of marble, rose tinted and amber, veined with blended hues, looms majestically far above the groups of humanity gathered in the space below. The pigeons circle in mid air, their plumage curiously resembling the colouring of the buildings where they lodge above cornice and column. The early mist is lifted by the sunbeams, like a veil, from the shaft of Giotto's tower, and every detail of arch and tracery fully revealed in the light of day.

Enter the tramcar for the Piazza Michelangelo, Arcetri, and the station of the Gelsomino. Is there nothing new under the sun? The tram glides through dark streets out to the river, crosses the



BOBOLI GARDENS.

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Grazie bridge, sweeps around the slope of hill, and ascends an avenue under trees of changing foliage. The transition is rapid, yet tranquil, and at each turn some exquisite beauty, in variety, is unfolded of the city outspread below, set in an amphitheatre of hills, the ancient wall flanking the Boboli gardens, and the Gate of St. George, the terraced height of Piazza on the summit, with the bronze David in the centre, the Franciscan church, and *San Miniato* beyond. The hoary castle keep of the *Torre del Gallo* is visible at the next bend, the familiar sentinel of the surrounding country.

The tramcar is a closed box, spacious, and with velvet cushions. A group of lady travellers of serious aspect, with guide books, survey the scene of changing lights, towers, roofs, and a thread of shining river through their spectacles. A rubicund and bluff man in a burly overcoat, cook or suburban restaurant keeper, greets gardeners and pedestrians of his acquaintance out of the window, in passing. An athletic girl, carrying a tennis racquet and a portfolio, steps off the platform, and enters a villa gate, to wend her way up an olive-clad slope. The tram waits under the trees, here and there, until others pass down. This leisurely loitering

keep, with a débris of objects on the ground, benches, shutters, an earthenware vessel, a *conca*, for water. A large cat of monumental aspect, with a white face, crouches under a shelving board at the side of the open door of the shop, and seems to do the honours of the place to customers, cat fashion. Behold the ancient kitchen of the palace, with a window pierced high in the vaulted interior, and heavily barred. Still in Wonderland the visitor stumbles, uncertain of step and vision, and discerns, in a shaft of pale light from the remote casement, a slab of marble serving as a counter in the central space, a cavernous hearth and oven on one side, with a projecting roof protecting the fire, and shelves along the wall, holding baskets and platters of pastry. Obscurity pervades the place, filling all remote corners, while a second door opens on a black gulf of adjacent cellar. A little dwarf woman serves customers with a smiling grace. Two slender boys come and go, carrying sheets of iron prepared for the oven with dabs of white foam of egg, and the daylight sheds a halo down on the curly hair of reddish gold of one, and black locks of the other. The child visitor of the fairy tale might marvel that some ma-

licious sprite does not mingle soot and ashes of the chimney with the confectionery here compounded, but the cakes emerge unharmed in delicate white flakes, in round tarts, in solid bars of dark and spicy paste. The little dwarf woman is presiding fairy of the place, erect, smiling, and pretty, even if some portly parent pastry cook lurks in shadow, in white cap and apron. Such is the cake shop of the ancient palace, with a connection of small dealers in different quarters of the town. To-morrow it will be swept away by change, and the building restored by an antiquarian as a museum or art gallery. Try your kodak on this interior before departing. Centuries ago the kitchen was used by a large household and retainers, with cooks and scullions peopling these shadows, now utilized to bake a few poor little cakes. We are admonished that to deal with history we must live in the period. What was the equivalent of the modern dumb waiter to the Priors and Gonfaloniere of other days? The noble race assuredly did not dine in the mouldy court, or in the porter's box next the stairway. Processions of menials must have carried the fish and game, and fortresses of jelly and sugar in mighty

dishes of metal and majolica to the state apartments of the first floor. A basket, lowered by means of a rope from an upper casement, and drawn up when filled, obtains in neighbouring streets.

The little dwarf woman is sagacious in her modest way. To connect yourself with some eating interest is one of the first principles of enterprise in our day.

The new quarter of Florence extends before the mediæval portal, half finished, gaunt, with yawning spaces of dismantled walls, and rows of shops displaying trinkets of beads and tinsel, silken stuffs, and laces. It serves as a Goblin Market, and the piping chorus of the dealers is audible above the church bells: "Come buy! Come buy!" There is a certain mockery about it all in a noble, old city.

Still more is the *centro* (new centre) a land of Cocaigne, where heavy featured and warmly coloured humanity lingers before show-cases of cheese, hams, sausages, caviare, sauces, essences, liqueurs, wines, and possibly smoked goose, or reindeer tongue potted for the jaded palate. The literature of the crowd should be such volumes as the *Voyage*

Gastronomique, by those tourists of the Seventeenth Century, Chapelle and Bachaumont, from Paris to the Pyrenees, by way of Provence, in which the authors chiefly ate their way through the land, with much complacency, from partridge served between golden crusts of toasted bread on the Loire to dining with the President Le Bailleul at Blois, when they admired the napery, the buffet, and the crystal more than the château and landscape. The *Almanach des Gourmands,* and the Epicure's Library, dealing largely with truffled turkeys and raised pies, must be delectable pages here.

"If life has no other meaning than lobster salad, then farewell life," quoth Mr. Lang. In the Florence centre the moralist must lay down his arms vanquished.

The statue of the old woman of the Capitol, ragged and miserable, yet hugging a wine jug, would be a more fitting emblem of the locality than Luca della Robbia's statue of Temperance, calm and severe, pouring steadily out of a small vessel the draught of moderation. "Come buy!" pipe the motley crew of the Goblin Market.

A true land of Cocaigne, this new quarter of Florence, especially for women, young and old.

What revelry in sweets is afforded to such children of a larger growth, with silvered hair, intent on purchases for their afternoon tea, as well as enthusiastic schoolgirls on their travels, the stranger within the gate to be gently despoiled, if possible, even by means of lovely little cakes, and delicious chocolate. On one side of a span new colonnade are temptingly displayed Turkish rose conserve, crystallized fruits, figs compounded with almonds in the mode of ancient Sybaris. Bonbons, artfully filled with strong liquors, instead of the gum, barley-sugar, and caramel of other days, invite purchase in enamelled boxes. Instead of the clumsy and dumpy wares of the mediæval cake shop, opera wafers which are a poetic dream of excellence are procurable, and the Triscuits, baked by electricity, evolved by the Niagara current. Flowers are rare, unless in the artificial garlands of the milliner. Perfumes abound to the limit of a sickly satiety, from amber and verbena, favourites of the Middle Ages, to the Biblical myrrh and nard, from the frangipane of the pages of Henry III of France, orange flower and iris of Gabrielle d'Estrées, to the all-prevailing violet of the twentieth century. The atmosphere is redolent

of hot confectionery as the accompaniment of the grinding machinery of chocolate mills in cellars. The very Campanile of Giotto is scented with vanilla to the parapet.

The black-robed band of the Misericordia passes rapidly around the corner of the Strozzi palace, bearing a light-covered ambulance litter.

Are we not told that Shakespeare's religion included a profound sense of the mystery of the world, and the pettiness of human lives?

Autumn Sowing

Follow the river at an early hour of the grey morning far down the valley. The sky has been dappled with fleecy clouds for days. "*Cielo a pecorello, acqua a catinella,*" say country folk.

Three old mendicants are seated in a nook of shrubbery playing cards. They are ragged and unkempt but hearty, fulfilling the adage: "health and liberty are worth more than a city." (*Sanità e libertà valgon più d'una città.*) This trio are eminently suggestive of their kind. They may resemble the Burmese vagrant, and find the suburban hedges a European equivalent of the rest-

house of teak wood on the margin of the forest of tamarinds and mangoes, wherein to count a chaplet of beads, and reflect on the emptiness of things. They may even more resemble the beggar recently arrested at Rome in possession of two books of the Savings Bank of notable sums.

In the shadow of a clump of ancient trees, ilex and oak, a little lad, sober and clear-eyed, gathers the fallen acorns into a bag for the swine, to load a cart, rudely fashioned, and has filled his cap with a small fungus. He is working for the *padrone,* he explains anxiously.

Pause in the grass of the bank, where the narrow stream is truly the ditch of Dante, and wise men would need to embark in a wash-basin to keep afloat, in steering down to Pisa and the sea. An Arno fisherman is seated on the brink, with a gourd beside him, half filled with water, and a few minnows swimming about. He will hawk these delicacies in the streets later. Indeed the Arno minnow is much esteemed by Italian invalids, devoid of appetite, especially feminine, when fried in oil.

The morning is sombre, still, and mild. All the tones of nature from the horizon, the clumps of

trees on the further bank, the harvest fields and vineyards gathered, and the tawny thread of Arno wending among the sedges are uniform, and of an unobtrusive brown hue. The fisherman seems to have seated himself beside the road of life to rest. Mother Earth is kind to this poor son, and will give him a bed at last. The atmosphere is dull, even melancholy. Occasionally sounds are brought to the ear from a distance, song, laughter, the lowing of cattle, the sharp barking of a dog. Activity prevails over the land. The oxen plough the soil to sow the winter grain. *"Ara co' buoi, e semina colle vacche,"* says the rustic. Far down the Maremma, the Campagna and the Pontine Marches the buffalo toil, the mules bring loads of charcoal, the flocks and cattle are tended. The October *feste* of vintage and harvesting are over, while the report of the hunter's rifle is heard on the distant hills. The husbandman, a type as ancient as the human race, sows the brown earth beyond the Arno banks. Oh, stranger, dweller in a wayside tent for a season, draw thy own furrow in peace!

Returning in the direction of the town the river is still the thread of endless suggestiveness in the

scene. The *renaiolo* plies his task. He is present, the gravel digger, in the cold wind, wading with bare limbs to the waiting boat with his basket of sand, while carriages pass along above, their occupants wrapped in furs. Arno gravel, brought down from the mountains by the streams, and purified by much washing in transition, is valued for wall building. The *renaiolo* knows all the sinister secrets of murder and suicide of the river, as he plies his task. Soon he will disappear in favour of a trolley, donkey, and carts loading at the Cascine gate for modern tramways, machinery ever replacing human labour. Poor women glean bundles of driftwood down on the river-bed to carry home on their heads. Urchins seek ever some treasure brought by the last flood. The Florence balcony would lack an important feature without the daily association of the river, even if dwindled here to a narrow current, and devoid of all beauty of volume in a water parched region.

XIX

IN THE FIRELIGHT

If you pitch your tent for a sojourn on the Arno bank, dear reader, look well to your hearthstone. The open fire has a great charm in the lands of the sun. There has always been a classical, and even an Oriental hearthstone for a burning log, or an aromatic branch, as well as the calorifer of northern lands. A tent may boast of a terra-cotta, or a porcelain stove, heated to a mild temperature with wood in a bleak portion of the interior, and even a fiery, glowing iron cylinder of trans-Atlantic origin in an antechamber, but the sanctum is the open hearth, if only a small space of chimney in the wall, with rounded base of stonework, and projecting, ornamental frieze, in gilt, speedily tarnished, forming an enclosure, and a little chimney-piece on the top, with a marble slab, whereon to place a vase, or a photograph.

Does the climate of Italy change for the worse

with the new century, or is humanity, only half clad in silk and linen, by the inexorable dictates of fashion, more rheumatic and sensitive to cold and rain? Winter shed down snow, occasionally, on the Forum, in early times, and the Roman citizen wrapped himself well in his *toga* to walk abroad. Venetian lagoons froze about belated boatmen in the Middle Ages, as to-day. Certainly the question of fuel is a tedious and expensive one, and drives the tide of *forestiere* to seek the public fire of hotel and *pension* as a solution of the problem. The supply of smutty coal from Belgium, by means of those channels of traffic, the tunnels of the St. Gothard and Mont Cenis, as well as the grimy cargo of British collier boats brought to Mediterranean ports, are more practical than attractive features of comfort. A stove, with a pipe groping up the wall is not cheerful, as a prosaic factor of well being.

In the Arno home all the pleasant associations of winter evenings gathered around the open hearth, albeit that a veering of the wind brought volumes of smoke, at times, and a hollow roar up the shaft, after too ardent kindling of a bundle of brushwood (the *fascinotti*) announced the conflagration

of soot-burdened flues under the roof. The southern fire seems especially a gift of nature to bring the open air life into an enclosed space for a brief period of cloud and storm. If you select several large pine cones from the adjacent carved wood-box, and kindle them together on a chilly night of autumn the aromatic flames sing in hissing whispers about the pine barrens of Pisa, and the ancient communes of Ravenna. The west wind, storm laden, blows down the chimney a greeting on the half-consumed cones, yielding a transfiguring glow before extinction, from the haunts of sea margin of the *boscaiuole,* a race apart, furtive, silent, wild, gleaning the waste spaces of tawny soil, and stagnant pool for reeds and other plants, eluding the forest guards as poachers and smugglers, the women gathering snowy-white fungus, branches in fagots, and the harvest of pine cones. Even the wood, a stick of fair proportions, solid and dry, oak or ash, for the olive root has long since been spent, weaves its own tale of timber hewing beyond Perugia and on the Apennine slopes where the Tiber has a cradle, with slow transition by the railway down to Florence. The flat disks of tan, known as *formes,* nurse the coals

for hours, and are capable of rolling out on the rug in a fiery wheel, with a shower of sparks, if rudely disturbed with the aid of a pair of bellows.

The old French peasant, after eating his soup, reads the history of his own life in the souvenirs of the firelight. The open hearth of the tent had not the associations of the *couvrefeu* of colder countries, in placing a cake of lignite on the embers, the *brikette,* yet phases of similarity might be traceable in twenty years of residence.

Georges Sand affirmed: "My most delightful journeys have been made at the corner of the fire, with my feet in the warm ashes, and my elbows resting on the worn and faded arms of my grandmother's chair."

The firelight so readily fashions a palace of dreams, *Palagio de sogno.* The home served for the obscure retreat of Sainte Beuve's artist apart from the general movement of the world, wherein to weave a web, or make honey. Again in a mood of kindling elation, when twilight deepens, all the achievements of the day fade to insignificance before the imposing rôle rehearsed in the obscurity. How majestically the most taciturn of us stalk

forth on the stage and declaim our part, half aware of our own absurdity.

On January the seventeenth the hearth of the house was heaped with fuel in honour of St. Anthony of the white beard. The pine cones gathered in a pyramid between the andirons sang the popular refrain:

"San Antonio della barba bianca,
Se non piove la neve non manca."

An icy wind had prevailed for days. The Arno was frozen in a crystal surface film, with a fringe of icicles along the margin, and snow clothed the surrounding hills, powdered the evergreens of Bellosguardo, and rested on roofs and parapets. Residents had already fled from villa and apartment, if possible, to Rome, Naples, Egypt, and the Riviera. The swallow instinct of restlessness in humanity renders the English and Americans utterly shamefaced to remain in a habitation for the entire season. What delightful journeys could be made on the Eve of St. Anthony by the fire of the home, tracing routes among the blazing embers, without the drawbacks of delayed trains, chill hotels, and loitering in damp churches. One

could eat fruit in southern California, while a pine cone consumed, and gaze on the wide expanse of Pacific Ocean. One could gather violets at Taormina, within range of the Greek Theatre, or skirt the coast of Dalmatia before the dried twigs of a branch of olive, from the parish church, or a wreath of holly had burned. The layer of snow on the balcony ledge might bring to mind the Polar bear peering down into the hut of Nansen and his comrade, on the border of Franz Joseph Land in the Arctic night. Still more vividly St. Anthony of the white beard, stalking abroad over the land, brought a picture in the fire of Canossa. The Italian journal on the table has the announcement:

"THE CASTLE OF CANOSSA FOR SALE AT AUCTION

"The Castle of Carpineti, the celebrated Canossa, where the Emperor Henry IV of Germany humiliated himself in 1077 before the Pope Gregory VII, by waiting for three days outside the portal, with bare feet, and clad in sackcloth, until the Pontiff would receive him, has nearly come to the hammer. The price was five hundred lire. Car-

pineti on a rock in the vicinity of Reggio Emilia is little more than a ruin, of which two or three chambers alone are preserved intact. The last proprietor was the Count Baldrighi, whose heirs have received offers from various foreign Archæological Societies. The Italian government reserves the right of precedence."

In the firelight a fragment of log assumes the crag of castle rock, in coals, before crumbling to ashes, crowned by dismantled walls, above the hamlet of Canossa, with the plain of the Po outspread to the north. The wind was as keen as when the Emperor Henry did penance in the snow with bare feet.

The last spark expired, the hearth chilled, and the cold of the night gained mastery in the silence and darkness.

XX

CASCINE NOTES

A Knight of the Saucepan

A DAY in February of the year 1904. No riotous mirth of Carnival disturbed the Cascine. The air was warm and balmy, after long weeks of rain, with a touch of winter in the upper air. A blue light of exquisite tone veiled the city walls and towers in the distance while the range of hills, amethyst and purple, had a keen clearness of pure outline crested by a chalky whiteness of snow. Monte Morello and the nearer slopes were grey and bare, melting away to Fiesole, the Prato-magno and the Falterona on the horizon, snow capped. Far away over a low margin of green the Duomo and the Campanile were visible, a bulb and pearl shaft against a background of shadowy Vallombrosa. Quiet groups of pedestrians strolled on the winter walk; the carriages were

few. The human chrysalis, in the words of a French philosopher, abounded, in every variety of type of beauty, Italians of the blond north, and Greek south; cherubic Anglo-Saxon; sprightly Russian, and Hungarian. The little German military hero, with lint white locks, proudly wore his tin sword buckled on, and led a tiny sisterkin in a furry coat. His Majesty, the baby, reigned over his respective household of high or low degree, in fluffy down, like a fledgling. Assuredly these small beings imbibed unconsciously, with the sunshine, the harmony of their surroundings. Poor and shabby infancy enjoys the Cascine on a holiday even in clumsy and faded raiment. These are not abashed by the splendour of their betters, only naïvely wondering and admiring, and are rich in sturdy health, glowing on cheek and lip, with the limpid eyes and curly heads portrayed in Art, emerging from dark, cold streets, or the Pignone quarter, across the bridge, under the guidance of a patient grandmother, or the precarious guardianship of shrill little sisters, and haphazard brothers intent on imitating the hooting automobile, and the fearsome, demoniac clatter of the motorcycle to intimidate babes. Children, with their govern-

ess, sought the purple anemone in the rich grass of a meadow. A group of little girls gathered near the hedge along the river opposite the circular opening of ancient trees and laurel flanked by the building of the School of *Pomologia*. The eldest girl, in a beaver hat of exaggerated dimensions, with a feather, spoke as one in authority:

"The Arno comes from the sea up to the hills yonder."

"No! no!" piped another. "The Arno begins (*principio*) at Pisa, and comes along here."

Oh, city of Toscanelli and Amerigo Vespucci! Oh, land of universal education and communal schools in the twentieth century! May not old creeds of geographical marvels still obtain credence, the earth be flat, concave, or square, after all, and islands exist where people never die?

The knight of the saucepan cared for none of these things on the day of Carnival. At least, if he cared, it must have been in a different way from the average holiday throng of the Cascine. He made a *genre* picture in his nook of a kitchen, the corner of the long building of the School of *Pomologia,* with a grated casement. He was a stout figure in a blue blouse and apron, and he

wore his cap tilted over one ear. The chimney was neatly finished with a border of tiles, and the sun shone on a brave array of saucepans and kettles hung on nails around the walls. He sang in heavy bass tones as he beat eggs, stirred a pot on the fire, or pounded crumbs in a stone mortar. His vocation in life was to minister to the hunger of the School of *Pomologia*. His sphere was humble, yet few cooks have such a kitchen. Indeed the Florence kitchen is usually an obscure room on some inner court of enclosed buildings, without ventilation. Here the cook might gaze forth on the sunny piazza, and Monte Oliveto across the river, surrounding ilex, oak, and magnolia trees, garden terraces, fragrant hedges, and rare plants, fostered in the enclosed high wall, with moss-stained coping terminating, at each angle, in the old, stone pavilion reminiscent of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany, and the Austrian rule. This building with its enclosure, so quaint and plain in simplicity, still basks in a tranquil atmosphere of seclusion. Birds sang to the cook from the shrubbery, if he paused in his own ditties to listen. Jasmine, roses, violets, and lilies wafted their scent through the barred casement from the moist soil.

His response was a fine odour of onions, peppers, and tomatoes, with a latent hissing of hot oil. He was not required to preside over gigantic cauldrons of rice, in making a Turkish *pillau,* like the college *Imaret* of Cavalla, yet he knew the value of the Italian saying: *Il riso fa buon sangue.* Rice makes good blood.

What were the meditations of the knight of the saucepan on the day of Carnival when all the world was abroad at the hour of sunset? Did he muse on the apple of the future, in this School of *Pomologia,* when the fruit will blush to be so old fashioned as to have a core, or a seed to its name? Did he ponder profoundly on the grafting and blending of pomegranate, cherry, currant, and orange into a new species? Nay; surely ambition whispered in his ear that even he might enter the list, and compete in the Gastronomical Carnival Fair, to which the *chef* of a Royal Prince would contribute, and win a prize by inventing a new dish. What if he discovered an artful and novel method of employing the truffle in a *galantina* of fowl; built a mosaic temple of game and ham in jelly; or designed afresh Niagara Falls in whipped cream?

The Fatted Ox

On a morning of early spring a pair of oxen crossed the suspension bridge of the Cascine. They were noble creatures of the famous race of the Val di Chiana, creamy white, gigantic in size, and benign of look and mien. The *contadini* who led them, as proud custodians, had tied bits of red ribbon about their flanks, and encircled their necks with garlands of fresh lilacs. These were prize cattle being driven to the barrier of the butchers for an exhibition of fatted beef and calves, the bovine babies fed on the equivalent of Mellin's food and breakfast cereals. Impressive ceremonies of distributing gold medals were to take place in the presence of the Minister of Agriculture, the President of Provincial Municipalities, the Prefect, and the Chamber of Commerce to decide on the symmetry or desirable plumpness of the competitors. The oxen, with their wreaths of lilacs, were a feature of the spring. The sky was blue, the air redolent of blossoms, and the birds sang in the ancient trees. The monumental animals, crossing the bridge on such a day, belong to the land, and the land belongs to them. The past

stretches far behind them. *T'amo, o pio bove,* sang the poet. They were ever decked with flowers for the pageants of Greek and Roman processions, as the bull was sacrificed before the temple of Jupiter, with roses around the neck, and red and white fillets on the head. Samson of the breed *Chianina,* and cousin of the proud race of Limousine cattle, is worthy of the April ceremony of ploughing in Siam, when the oxen are gaily bedecked, their horns gilded, and their limbs rubbed with incense for the religious ceremony of tracing nine furrows, for the sowing of rice, after which the noble beasts are unyoked and fed with maize, sesame, sago, rice, bananas, sugar-cane, and melons.

The white brothers, pacing gently over the Cascine bridge, have had a place of honour in the monastic lore of the Middle Ages, full of quaintness and simplicity, adapted to rustic folk, and like the animals of a toy Noah's Ark. Dialogues were recounted after the example of St. Francis of Assisi, of the talk of the oxen in stalls with their friends the mules, donkeys, and goats. Did not the Padre Gian Francesco Scottoni write *Dialoghi tra il bue e l'asino ed altri loro amici sopra materie interessanti e dilettevoli?*

To-day the fatted ox appertains to some noble, who devotes himself to agricultural interests on the property of his ancient inheritance, where he has vineyards, olives, cattle, poultry, cultivates trout, and has ambitions in furnishing the market with butter, jam-pots, and alimentary conserves. Is not the Florentine noble of this class a type still unique in Europe? Is not his favourite literature the Latin writers on agriculture, Cato, Columella, or Palladio? Does he not value Machiavelli in his library still chiefly for his dissertations on country life? The sombre, old *palazzo* in the city has the wicket at one angle, where wine and oil of the estates are sold to townspeople. His hospitality is shown in autumn hunting parties at some ancient Castle of the hills, or the Maremma, where hare, partridge, and pheasant are shot. He probably possesses Mirabeau's gift of easy familiarity with all classes, and associates with his peasantry without patronage. The twentieth century modifies even this Feudal lord, dwelling on the land of his ancestors. The much vaunted problems of the development and advance of Italy signifies, in his case, the tunnels and railways to carry his wine, poultry, and even vegetables over the

frontier to Berlin and Paris. The automobile, in guise of a triumphant chariot, transports him swiftly from one end of the Peninsula to the other.

The fatted ox passed on the dusty, white road from the bridge to the further gate. The swarthy, grimy workman, with his coat slung over his shoulder, observed the sleek animal, with knitted brow, and in silence. For him was the problem of gaining daily bread in foundry and workshop. Who does not take anxious thought for the morrow? "*Dio non paga il sabato, ma paga,*" says the proverb. God does not pay on Saturday, but he pays. The tired, little apprentice boy, carrying his jacket over one shoulder, in the traditional way, with thin legs clad in short knee breeches, who rests on the Arno parapet until joined by comrades to trudge homeward over miles of country at night, smiled listlessly.

Further in shadow of garden hedge a group of the unemployed sat on the grass, and listened to a paper read aloud by one of the number. "*Pane in piazza, giustizia in palazzo,*" proclaimed the orator. The song of the birds mingled with the diffusion of ideas, socialistic, revolutionary, conservative for the public good, faithful to forsaken

CASCINE HEDGE.

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causes in a certain sense. Smoke of tall chimneys hung low over the fair city, and Industry followed its course.

The sinister and shabby youth, pale and alert, in hiding among the Cascine hedges over night for some theft, eyed the fatted ox, garlanded with lilacs, with a certain raillery and mockery. *Il lupo non mangia alcun inverno.* The wolf does not eat every winter.

An Iris Meadow

The pilgrim donned a straw hat, took tinted spectacles and umbrella in hand, and sought the Cascine in the early morning. *Il bel tempo non vien mai a noja* is an adage verified by the day. The avenue clothed in a soft billow of delicate foliage led far beyond the tennis ground, the pyramid, and branching ways to an expanse of meadow extending to the piazzale.

The Flower City, in honour of some Horticultural Congress, planted the border of this wide space with the iris, and wove ivy tendrils about the wire fence. The town went mad over the graceful and familiar emblem of the Arno capital. Every garden parterre and terrace bloomed with

stiff ranks of iris, while fragrant sheaves and tufts filled every basket of the vendors, and the corners of palaces.

The pilgrim paused at the meadow, as the Persian is reputed to worship the rose, or the Japanese places a branch of cherry blossoms in a porcelain jar. One season a solitary Iris opened here first, and stood alone. The stately flower, born to the purple, unfolded its banner to the soft breeze in all historical association rather than as the sweet flower-de-luce of silent river and solitary fen. Pomp of circumstance belongs to the Iris of the Cascine border on the spring morning. "Is there any one who would clothe himself in purple, if nobody were to see him?" queried Seneca.

Ah, lovely Iris, swaying in gentle greeting to the mountains and sky, how proud is your lineage in volumes of Heraldry, wrought on coat-of-arms, the pavement of churches, the diaper-work of shields, the border of coronets, the heads of sceptres, or the pommel of swords! No wonder that France chose you, flower of the field, as her emblem instead of Lion, Griffin, or Eagle. Tradition wove about the baptism of Clovis that the Virgin sent an angel from heaven with the lily. Hence

the precedence claimed by the French Bishops at the Council of Trent by reason of this gift. The seal of Augustus and St. Louis had the same origin.

Again the Iris meadow was all in bloom, a ribbon of colour on the margin of grass flecked with buttercups, until the field resembled a cloth-of-gold, where white butterflies flitted. The air was sweet with hay-making in adjacent meadows, and the scents of thyme and cowslip from the country-side. "Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

A white automobile passed swiftly, raising the dust in clouds that swathed the Iris meadow in a pall of obscurity, with a reeking smell of petroleum. Scarcely had the breath of heaven, a pure air, fanned aside the stifling vapour when the yellow automobile succeeded, uttering a heavy note of the trumpet, and again stirring the road. In turn the red, green, grey, and blue and silver automobile whirled along, each overwhelming the Iris border and the grass slopes with dirt and odour. Alas! the hour was not destined for the tranquil

refreshment of humanity. The strange and cumbersome machines threaded the park from one extremity to the other, returned, at full speed, met, and parted again with a wearisome rapidity, blotting out the lily of the field in a choking whirlwind. One proudly gave forth an eery, blood-curdling sound, like the wail of a banshee, calculated to set the teeth on edge of mortals, and startle the mildest horse into flight. Where will it all end? Has the strife of a new era actually begun? "*L'uomo e il guastatore d'ogni cosa creata,*" said Leonardo da Vinci. (Man is the destroyer of every created thing.)

When the day has waned to the evening hour the Iris meadow of the old Cascine once more claims its own. A poet may wander here, in reverie, and behold the Lady Matilda crossing the blooming mead, while the fireflies begin to gleam in the shrubbery. *Bel lucciolaio, bel granaio.* Many fireflies are a sign of a good harvest.

XXI

STRIKING THE TENT

In the springtime the swallow instinct of restlessness and discontent pervaded the home. The spirit of the age entered even here. The days had been made up of small acts, unobtrusive pleasures, precious moments which had in them elements of the beautiful, the good, the eternal, when one inmate gained the Great Peace. Put all sadness far from thee, admonished Wisdom. Life is half spent before one knows what life is. Happiness lies in yesterday and to-morrow. Truly for everyone it is only in contemplating the past that the vision acquires strength to penetrate the future.

The foundations of the home were already rudely shaken by the next comer, a military hero, who invaded the place, at all hours, to inspect the dimensions, and bore partitions for new electric gear. The old order changes, giving place to new

in a summary fashion in the Flower City, under similar circumstances.

The last night of occupancy came. The full moon shone on the Arno quarter, ennobling all because she effaced details, and left only a harmonious whole, as in the estimation of Corot. The stars were luminous in the purity of the heavens. How many years the Star of the Epiphany had been watched from the balcony, moving westward, as the wise men saluted the orb.

The furniture of the spot was grouped together for the last time. On the morrow the various articles would be separated, and carried to other households. Surely there was a rustle and creaking of woodwork and drapery in the silence of midnight while the moon shone through the uncurtained windows. A perfume of sandalwood, lacquer, and cedar was perceptible, with some faint and lingering exhalation of the last flowers to be gathered here. Slight creakings and tiny, silvery tinklings might be readily interpreted into an interchange of talk. The fragile cups on a vermilion platter were ungrateful and supercilious.

"We move to-morrow to a boudoir where there will be some society," rattled the cups. "The lux-

ury of silken hangings will be soothing, and the touch of jewelled fingers."

"What is society?" questioned the antique seat, covered with faded yellow satin, reputed to have once stood in the Sienese palace of Pia di Tolomei.

Dante, hooded, and crowned with a laurel wreath, in a narrow panel of wood framed on the wall, suggested:

"Whom a thirst
Ardent, unquenchable fires
Not with the crowd to be spent,
Not without aim to go round
In an eddy of purposeless dust."

The kettle, mounted on a silver standard, sang: "Don't you all know what society means? To one who has a pie in the oven you may give a bit of your cake."

All the little gods of ivory encrusted with carvings, the god of war, the goddess of the Arts, the god of riches, patron of the sea and fishes, seated on a bag of rice, and even Hotei, deity of infancy, with a sack of goodies on the back, of a string of Netshés suspended from an altar vase in which to burn perfumes, grinned a mocking assent to the wisdom of the sentiment. The grasscloth ham-

mock from British Honduras, gift of sailors, coiled up in a corner, demurred in favour of Shelley's preference for tranquil solitude, and the company of the quiet, wise, and good. Then the plated candlestick from the sale at the Villa of San Donato, with the green shade, still standing on the table, spoke with authority:

"The best society the world can offer has visited this house for twenty years, gathered within the disk of my four candles, in the books of the Florence Vieusseux Library. What a charming company of guests, received without ceremony, prepared to enlighten, amuse, or absorb, and capriciously dismissed, put aside, without taking offence."

Assuredly the furniture creaked and rustled, bidding farewell to comrades; the worn Smyrna rug spread under the foot of the carved table, and the heavy portière, possibly woven from the wool of Kurdish flocks. A ripple of light crossed the surface of a crystal mirror, touched by the moon. A picture opposite revealed in the wan ray the angel arousing Joseph from heavy sleep with the warning to take the Christ child and his mother, and flee into Egypt. Beyond another canvas

showed the Archangel Michael trampling Evil under his foot.

"Tell me, my soul, what is thy creed,
Is it a faith, or only a need?"

The balcony overlooks the street, with the trees of the Cascine visible at one end, and the long vista of curving Arno bank in the other direction. The strangers come and go, and are scarcely noticed in transition. When the night wind sweeps the balustrade and ledge, swaying some fading plant on the parapet, memories of all the hopes, and fears, and unfulfilled aspirations of the human breast may linger, for a moment here.

A travelling bag and cloak were on a chair, near the entrance way, and these spoke together of the morrow. What was to be the future of the modern pilgrim? All roads are open to the woman of the twentieth century. Xavier de Maistre scoffed that no woman has written an Iliad, Paradise Lost, or Tartuffe; designed a church of St. Peter; carved an Apollo Belvedere; painted a Last Judgment. Even so; yet the woman of the time may prove another Madame Curie in fresh fields of radio activity where battles must be waged to conquer.

The pilgrim turns instinctively to native land, after long absence. *Tutto il mondo è paese.*

Whether to explore unknown routes with the ardour of an Ampère, or to choose a tide-pool of study, and swim about solely in a favourite century, the Eighteenth or the Fourteenth? The field of artistic needlework has charms, and such allurements as cultivating plants, fostering butterflies for decorations, and rearing spiders to obtain their webs abound. What if one became another Lady Isis in some remote wilderness, and taught the nomads to harvest barley and wheat by some new method? Again change may prove a mere oscillation of the pendulum of life. Thus the travelling bag and the cloak whispered together through the night.

The old clock on the bracket was mute: Time had ceased.

When morning came the modern pilgrim folded her tent, and silently stole away.

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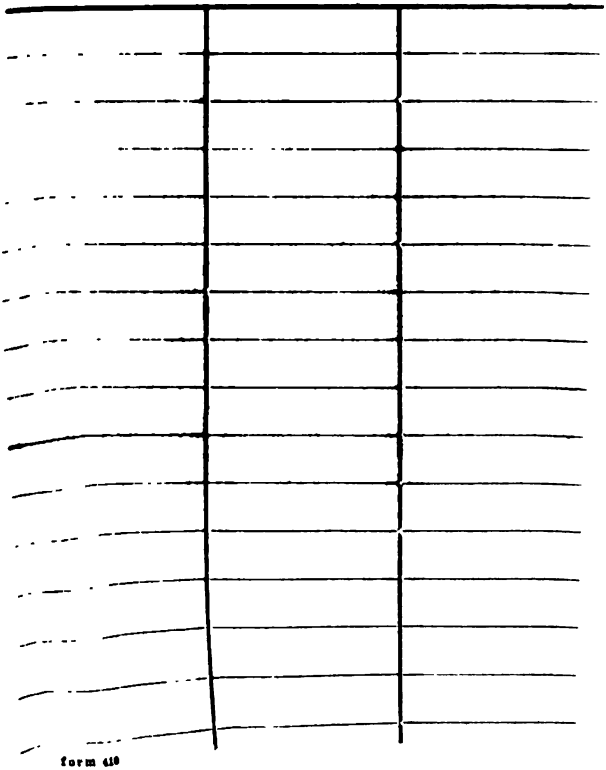

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